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ADDRESSES TO MEN

BY THE REV.

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Author of "The Christ Face in Art," "Sermons
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LAWS OF LIFE AND DESTINY

THE LAW OF DETECTION

Be sure your sin will find you out.—NUM. xxxii. 23.

THESE words were spoken first of all to the members of the tribes of Gad and Reuben. Permission to settle on the east side of Jordan was granted to them on the strict condition that they were to assist the other tribes in settling on the other side. If they failed in their promise, then Moses warned them that they would suffer the consequences of their betrayal. Nor

would they be able to hide their disloyalty behind any specious excuse. "Be sure," he says, "your sin will find you out."

This flashing sentence has long since lost its local setting and is now enshrined amongst the world's great sayings. For it states in few words what mankind through countless ages has come to recognize as a fact of life. There is something, man has discovered, about sin; something in its very constitution; something in the laws of the world concerning it, which makes it—however skilfully hidden—work its way upward to the surface, and forces it to throw its jagged edges into the light. It is not merely that sin is punished—that too is true—the words mean more than this; they mean that sin cannot be hidden; that sin fatally opens itself to detection, and that there is some strange force in the world ceaselessly employed in detecting it. They mean, too, that every sinner is found out; that however secretly his sin may be hidden, he is by it detected and betrayed. This is a very startling and terrifying statement

THE NEMESIS OF CRIME

3

if it is true, and our duty is to put it, as far as we can, to the test.

I

THE NEMESIS OF CRIME

FIRST of all with regard to crime—that form of it, at least, which fills our Law Courts—it may be at once admitted that detection, though not inevitable, is usual. A Justice of the Peace of Middlesex, who had been on the bench for over a quarter of a century, declared the other day, that what amazed him in his long experience of the criminal was his extraordinary cleverness, and his no less extraordinary futility. In the carrying out of his plans, always one thing seemed to have been omitted—and that usually the most obvious—which led to his detection.

While this is true of the casual criminal we meet with something deeper and more mysterious when we enter the region of great crimes, and especially where human

life has been taken. The Greeks, who were the most acute of all observers of the facts of human experience, were so profoundly awed by a sense of this law of detection, that they believed, when a great crime was committed, the birds and beasts, even the earth and sea, became conscious of it, and leagued together to track the criminal, and force him to confess. And we too, in one of those proverbial sayings, which sum up the facts of human experience, declare the existence of such a law in the saying—"Murder will out." What does that mean but that looking over a vast range of experience, humanity has become convinced that everything is against the successful hiding of crime; that in spite of cleverness and subtlety the secret "will out." Many, no doubt, in this connexion will recall Hood's well known poem "Eugene Aram," founded upon an actual event. Eugene Aram murdered a man, and threw his body into the river—"a sluggish water, black as ink, the depth was so extreme." Next morning he visited the spot:—

“ I saw the black accursed pool,
With a wild misgiving eye ;
And I saw the Dead in the river bed,
For the faithless stream was dry.”

Taking up the dead body he carried it into the depth of the forest, and heaped the leaves over it ; but next a mighty wind swept through the wood, and scattered the covering :—

“ Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep ;
For I knew my secret then was one
The earth refused to keep :
Or land, or sea, though he should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep.”

But even when the criminal evades the agents of the law he has to deal with a more unerring detective. Coleridge tells of an Italian assassin who fled to Germany and gained a safe retreat from his pursuers, but he could not gain a safe retreat from the detective voice within. Soon afterwards he returned to the scene of his crime, gave himself up, and expiated his deed on the scaf-

fold. The papers even of the last few days relate a similar case of a murderer driven to confess because he "couldn't sleep." The strange temptation, too, of the criminal to haunt the scene of his crime is one of the commonplaces of criminal psychology. From all those facts it is clear that no words could more fitly or truly be placed over our criminal courts than these—"Be sure your sin will find you out."

While all this will be admitted, there will be an objection forming without doubt in the mind of the reader. "Detection," it will be said, "is the rule, but it is not an absolute rule. A great many criminals escape; a great many sinners commit sin and are not found out; a great many villains pass through life, sleek and well-to-do, whose villanies are never detected at all. All that can be said, therefore, of this law is, that the chances are that the sinner will be found out, but there is also a considerable number of chances that, in this life anyhow, he will escape. What you will no doubt say now is, that though he may escape here,

he will be found out hereafter, when he stands before another judgment bar."

Now this is exactly what we do not say. There has been far too much given away in this favourite device of the pulpit of calling Eternity in to square the accounts left over in this world. Of course, at the judgment bar of Heaven all shall be revealed, but what we say with regard to sin is—that *it is revealed here*. The text is to be taken as it stands. Every sinner *is found out here* and detection is certain and inevitable.

Note, however, what the text says. It does not say "Be sure the public will find you out." It does not say, "Be sure the police will find you out." It must be admitted, of course, that a great many crimes go undetected, and a great many sinners are never publicly branded for their misdeeds. It is clear that God never intended that all our shortcomings should immediately chronicle themselves in the heavens, and that nothing we ever did could be safe from the prying eyes of the public. Did detection follow automatically every act, good or

bad, however trivial, then it is clear that all freedom of action would be stifled. Our natures would be stunted, since there could be no opportunity for the healthy growth of individuality.

What the text says, however, is not "Be sure the public will find you out," but "Be sure your *sin* will find you out." That is a very different thing. The public may be deceived, may be thrown off the track, may think a man respectable while he is living a secretly depraved life; but sin itself is a detective no man can deceive. It is sin that finds a man out; the man's own sin tracks him, makes its marks upon him, writes his guilt upon him in letters that are as a flame of fire.

Let us see now how true this is.

II

SIN'S MARKS

FIRST of all sin writes its secret history upon a man's character. Suppose a man indulges in some secret sin, do you for a single moment imagine that sin leaves the man the same

after its committal as before? If I tell a lie, or commit a felony, or indulge in some vicious act, is my nature unaffected by it? Of course not. There is nothing that humanity is more certain about than this. The universal testimony of mankind unites to declare that no man can sin and remain the same. Every sin writes itself upon the character of the sinner, lowers it, weakens it, stains it, scars it. No one can possibly deny this. Well, what is this but finding us out? The public may never know; we may even shut our own eyes and call sin by another name, we may deceive the world, but we cannot deceive sin. Every sin a man commits is seared upon the tablets of his soul, and produces its inevitable results upon his character, and conduct, and life. The man's sins come home to roost; sin finds the sinner out.

But sin finds us out not only in the weakening of our moral and spiritual fibre, it finds us out in the ceaseless accusations of conscience. This mysterious faculty Watts has represented in his well-known picture "The

Dweller in the Innermost" as a female figure seated in the centre of a luminous mist, far withdrawn, having arrows on her lap with which she pierces the heart of the sinner. In the "Innermost" of every being there sits such a watcher, sleepless, vigilant, untiring, and, swift with the committal of the sin, come the pierce of her arrow, and the wound, to remind us that we cannot sin without detection, and without penalty.

"O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me,"
cried Richard the Third.

"My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain."

His sin had found him out !

Now were no more to be said than this it would be enough to prove the statement that instant detection follows sin, but it may not be enough to terrify the sinner. Love of sin is so deep-rooted in us that as long as we can sin in secret, as long as we are able to indulge our passions and not be found out, we are

willing even to bear the stings of conscience, while the deterioration of character is so gradual that it ceases, except in some awful moments, to disturb us. If this were all that could be said with regard to sin's detection it is quite possible that many would remain unaffected by it. But this is not all that can be said. It is not the nature of sin to go on corrupting the nature, poisoning the imagination, tearing down and ravaging the defences of the soul, and *hide itself out of sight*. In a deep and true sense there is no such thing as "secret sin." Sin cannot be hidden; it refuses to hide itself, the moment it is committed it begins to work itself out, and with clamant voice calls for detection.

If any one doubt this let him spend an half hour in the Roman Room of the British Museum. In that room there are arrayed on pedestals busts of the Roman Emperors. In five minutes any intelligent reader of history, and of human character, could prove to himself or to another in a way he is never likely to forget, how so-called secret sins

rise to the surface, and write themselves indelibly upon a human face. Let some one take him, for instance, to the bust of Nero, first of all telling him of Nero's youth, how he was the favourite pupil of Seneca, one of the noblest Romans who ever lived, showing him also Nero's appearance as a young man, with his handsome face and open look ; then when he had seen what he was like while yet sin had but feeble hold upon him, bid him gaze long and silently upon the face before him, and read its awful lessons. In the interval Nero had massacred the Christians, murdered his mother, set Rome on fire, and brought his empire to the verge of ruin through his lusts and crimes. And there, in the thick neck, in the coarse lips, in the brutal sensuality, you have it all written by sin's unerring pen. His sin had found him out, but not only that, it had written across that brutal face, for all the world to see, that no man can sin and remain the same. Sin will out, it writes itself upon the face, it betrays itself in the look, in the inflections of the voice, in language and in

gesture, in a thousand subtle but unmistakable ways. And you are detected. You may not be detected in the individual sin, but in the mass effect upon your character of any secret indulgence you are detected. You are constantly giving yourself away, even though you may be the last to know it.

There is one last fact about sin's detection no less startling in character. Not only does sin write its effects within by weakening and corrupting the moral defences of the character, and write itself without upon the face, in the look, and bearing, but every different sin has its own distinct and individual mark. So that not only the fact of sin, but the *actual kind of sin can be detected*.

Take pride, for instance. Can Pride be hidden in the heart so that its presence cannot be detected? No! it cannot! Individual acts of pride may be hidden, but the proud heart expresses itself in the proud look, and the proud look is different from all other kinds of look. It has an individuality

of its own which cannot be mistaken. Take cruelty. Can the cruel man hide under the mark of suavity and of polish the arctic coldness and callousness of his nature? He cannot. He may hide individual acts of cruelty, but his sin finds him out, and writes its presence in the steely glitter of the eye. And no one mistakes the cruel look for a kind one. Take sensuality. Can a man indulge in animal passions and preserve a look of chastity and innocence? He cannot. He may successfully sin in secret, but in the coarsened face, in the changed use of words, and in the sensual look his sin writes itself so that all may read. The innocent and the pure shrink from him by instinct. His sin has not only found him out within, it has written itself in letters of flaming fire without. No one mistakes the sensual look. It has its own mark, and he is by it detected and betrayed. And so is it with all sin. Go over each one, and you will see that each has its mark which cannot be hidden, and which distinguishes it from all others—envy, vanity, hypocrisy, covetousness, self-

ishness, untruthfulness—over all these the words are written, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” That which is within declares itself in its own vivid and particular way without. Such are the facts of sin, and God will have it so. And terrible facts they are; sufficient to blanch the cheek surely of the most hardened and depraved; sufficient to arrest us, let us pray, if we are becoming sin’s victims.

III

THE MERCIES OF DETECTION

So far this law of Detection may only have appeared as implacable and cruel, seeking only to drag the sinner remorselessly to ruin. It is necessary therefore for us to bring it into line with the moral government of the universe. What we want to prove now is that this law which seeks ever to bring sin to the light is merciful as well as just, kind as well as unswerving. And this we think may be shown on two grounds.

Firstly, God has ordained that sin shall be

detected *in order that the world may be defended from utter ruin, and preserved in health.* This may be seen more clearly if viewed in the realm of physical disease. In this realm the law of detection works in the same way ; it works for the detection of disease, and the object of detection is the salvation of society. Suppose, for instance, that you are smitten by some infectious fever. What happens ? That fever reveals its presence in a quickened pulse, in a flushed cheek, in a physical derangement. This is how the physician can diagnose what you are suffering from, for every disease, like every sin, has its own distinguishing mark. The physician is a detective engaged upon the secrets of the body, and the whole science of medicine starts from the assumption that every disease has its own particular marks by which it can be identified. But suppose that it were otherwise ? Suppose that Nature rang no alarm bell ; suppose that when you were smitten by an infectious disease you showed just the same symptoms as in ordinary health, what would happen ?

With no knowledge of the existence of disease there would be no possibility of checking it, you would perish miserably without the slightest chance given to you of escape. Not only so, but you would hand the infection on to others, so that in a short time the whole race of man would be swept out ; the earth would become a vast tomb. The law of detection in disease, therefore, is a *law of salvation*, as blessed and beneficent as any of the laws of God. The same thing is true of the diseases of the soul created by sin. If the sinner could so sin as to feel no change in himself, and so sin as to make it impossible for others to see any difference in him ; if the world had no power to protect itself against the sinner, no power to distinguish between the pure and the impure, the just and the criminal, then it needs no superior intelligence to tell us what would happen. In fifty years this fair earth would become a perfect Hell, and the race of man would become a race of devils. The law of detection, therefore, is a law of salvation. Instead of being implacable and

cruel, it is a law of mercy and kindness, as holy and beneficent in its workings as any of the laws of God. For it is only by detecting sin that mankind can be saved from its ravages.

The second reason is, that Detection *opens the door of salvation to the sinner himself.*

Take as an illustration the following incident. Some time ago a man, occupying a place of considerable trust, embezzled a large sum of money. He began without the slightest intention of stealing—took a little money to tide him over a difficulty, fully intending to replace it; finding himself unable to do this, he took a little more to cover the first default, and so went on until he was driven to live a life of fraud and deception. Being clever, daring, and resolute, he continued successfully for many years to avoid detection. But consider his state of mind! Through all these years he never had a moment's peace. He lived a haunted life. As long as he was engaged in scheming and covering over his defalcations what chance

had prayer in his life ? or love ? or any virtue whatsoever ? Religion, the Church, God, were all, he felt, in league against him ; the man's whole moral and spiritual nature was gradually being submerged in his efforts successfully to hide his sin. At last the crash came, and he was mercifully detected. Accused before the magistrates, he confessed, and was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. But the strange thing was that with the detection and confession the terrors in which he had lived, lifted ; he was restored to a condition in which he could approach God ; longings which through all the evil years had been impossible to him now visited his soul ; he came to himself, and coming to himself he came back to his Father. Detection, thus, had proved his salvation. The Law which seemingly so cruelly had laid him in the dust, had really lifted him up to the redeeming heart of God. For the first time for years he was happy, and at peace with himself.

This conception of the mercy of detection

is wrought out by Browning with his usual subtlety in his "Red Cotton Nightcap Country." The sordid hero, who has been living a life of duplicity, is gradually driven to choose between two alternatives. The best thing that happened to him, the poet declares, was the

"Rough but wholesome shock,
An accident which comes to kill or cure,
A jerk which mends a dislocated joint."

Then through detection comes the possibility of a fresh beginning, for ever impossible while the sin remained securely hidden :—

"Thus by a rude in seeming—rightlier judged
Beneficent surprise, publicity
Stopped further fear and trembling, and what tale
Cowardice thinks a covert; one bold splash
Into the mid-shame, and the shiver ends."

Do not think then that detection pursues a man simply to blast and ruin him. It finds him out to "stop further fear and trembling," and to save him from an eternal ruin. It is a law, therefore, of salvation; it is charged

deep with the mercy and beneficence of God.

IV

THE WAY OF ESCAPE

THE fact of Detection, however, notwithstanding the luminous kindness in the heart of it, remains, and it is sufficiently terrifying to startle the most careless. Stevenson said that when he was writing the *Master of Ballantrae*, he tried to make the hero white, but that he would turn out black in spite of him. Well, no one can honestly deal with the facts of sin and make them turn out white. They, too, will turn out black in spite of him, for black they are. There are two classes, therefore, to whom some words of kindly counsel may fitly be directed.

First to the *Young*.

And to them two things may be said with regard to sin.

(a) FEAR IT. You who are young are living at the most blessed and hopeful time

of life ; sin has not yet got hold of your heart ; you may be allured by it, but you do not love it. Fear it, therefore, as you fear nothing else. There is nothing ignoble in such fear, it is in itself the highest mark of nobility. Do not fear it because it will find you out, fear it because of what it is, and what it does. If any of your companions so influence you that in their company sin seems less shameful, then fear them, fear their influence. The Apostle John entering a bath on one occasion found Cerinthus within, and fearing his influence, fled from his presence. What the Apostle of Love feared, you may fear.

(b) SEEK SHELTER. Self-defence against sin's subtleties is insufficient defence ; seek therefore shelter. Dr. George Adam Smith tells how in the desert nothing will grow because of the blighting sand storms which sweep over it. Sometimes, however, a great rock juts up in the wilderness of sand, and there in the lee of it, in its gracious shelter and shadow, beautiful flowers spring up, white and pure. Seek the shelter of Christ, Who is as a great rock in a weary land.

Only behind Him Who faces the storms of sin, and defies them, can human life find a place of refuge.

The Second Class to whom this subject, and these facts which we have elicited, come with tragic warnings, *is the sinner*.

Every sinner knows that he is detected. In the secret of his heart, he says, "Sin has found me out. I cannot do the things I would. My will is weakened, my mind tainted, my heart is growing corrupt." Nothing can be done for such a man until there follow this admission the cry—"How can I escape? How can I regain my lost purity?"

Well, no one can regain his lost purity. God Himself cannot unmake the past, or make a sinner's heart as if he had never sinned. Sins may be blotted out, but scars remain. But this can be said. There are redemptive processes in the world which can enter the heart of the most degraded sinner and arrest the drift; which can begin to work upon that sodden and ruined nature and reconstruct it in its original likeness. One of the most priceless possessions of the British

Museum is what is known as the "Portland Vase." It is one of the most beautiful things in the world, a work of beauty and a joy for ever. One day a madman entered the Museum, and with one blow of his stick shattered the vase into a thousand fragments. There it lay on the floor, mere broken earthenware, what before had been a thing of priceless value. But one came along, and picked up the broken fragments, and lovingly and with infinite patience pieced them together. And so triumphantly that while with careful looking the marks where it was broken may be seen, the original beauty is restored, while it is enriched by the love and devotion of him who devoted himself so long and patiently to its restoration.

This is the blessed work that the Lord Jesus Christ is engaged in. He is restoring "Broken Earthenware," and building it up into its original likeness. With infinite love and patience He begins upon the broken fragments of the most ruined life, and as long as it is committed to Him He will not cease until He restore it. And what vic-

tories are His! Harold Begbie, in his *Broken Earthenware*, tells of one thus reclaimed who was known as "Old Born Drunk." "He was a true miserable, lower than anything to be found in barbarous nations, debased out of humanity. Brought to a meeting he heard some one testify." Here now are his own words:—

" ' While I was listening to Joe, thinking of what he's been, and seeing all that he's become, all of a sudden it took me that I'd find God, and get Him to make me like Joe. It took me like that. I just felt all of a sudden determined to find God. Determined,' he repeated, with an energy astounding in this broken and helpless creature of alcoholism."

Let the sinner regard these two things long and seriously—the fact of sin, and the fact of redemption. Both intimately concern him. On the one hand is inevitable detection, on the other salvation; the one speaking of ruin, the other of rescue.

Let him look long at these two things, and then *Make His Choice*.

THE LAW OF ASPIRATION

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.—COL. iii. 1, 2.

IT is difficult to define exactly where a Christian man differs from a man of the world. But the best working distinction is suggested by this text. A man of the world sets his affections upon the things that are beneath, a Christian man on the things that are above. It is not affirmed, of course, that the Christian man will always be true to his ideal, that he will bring always into his life the inspiration of the unseen. He will often fail to do this. You may say that you know of men who are not Christians who show up better than those who are. This may be quite true; but if you are led by this to think lightly of Christianity

you do not prove yourself a very profound thinker. Allowances must always be made for the soil in which Christ has to do His work. Some come into life heavily handicapped, and it is not fair to contrast men as if they represented a dead level of opportunity. Given time—and as Browning says, “We have all eternity to grow in,”—and the Christian man is bound to win. At the end of the race there will be only one kind of man left. However poor the Christian man may have appeared in comparison with the worldly man at one stage of his development, he is bound, because of this fundamental difference of aim, at last to outstrip the other by the whole breadth of a universe. For a man is potentially what he aims at becoming.

Turning now to Paul’s words as applied to the Colossians we see that he is stimulating them to an increased concentration on the “things above.” “Aspire! Aspire!” he cries. “Lift up your eyes to the goal, and strain to reach it. Cast off indifference and languor, cast off sloth and callousness: Seek

the things that are above! Bring into earthly duties the inspiration of the ideal! Lift up life's commonest obligations until they become flamed by lofty and eternal principles. Though your feet tread the mire and the clay of earth, walk with resolute step and undaunted mien! Realize that your citizenship is in Heaven, that you are risen with Christ!"

This is the heroic note that Paul strikes in addressing the Colossians, and in striking it he is only giving expression to the dominant impulse of his own life. No one could conceive of Paul going through the world with drooping heart, or with head hanging down. He was the hero of a dauntless faith. He paced through life with head thrown back, with eyes uplifted, with heart so set upon the great things that he rose above life's tragic sorrows and the enmities of evil men. He conquered life, and suffering, and persecution, and death, by the power of aspiration. "Not as if I had already attained," he cried, "but I press on toward the mark of the prize of the high

calling in Christ Jesus." This is the characteristic impulse of Paul's life summed up in a sentence—he "pressed toward the mark;" and the mark was not lying near by, or low down on the horizon; it was exalted in the heavens; it was hid with Christ in God. No man ever fulfilled as Paul did, that dauntless aspiration, and quenchless optimism of outlook, which Browning expresses in his great lines:—

"One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,

Never doubted clouds would break;

Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong
would triumph,

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,

Sleep to wake."

The secret of Paul's victorious life was Aspiration, and he declares that it is the secret of all victory. Only by aspiring, only by setting our affections on things above, only by ceaselessly straining after them, can man conquer himself, conquer the world, and gain the prize.

This is Paul's profound declaration to us,

and it is our duty now to test it ; to set ourselves seriously to consider whether or no it is true ; and, if true, how far it contains a direct message to us in this far-off country and age.

Let us begin then by seeing if this uplifting force which we call Aspiration, and which Paul so urgently pleads with us to exercise in the spiritual sphere, has any implication or existence elsewhere. If it has ; if, for instance, we can discover anything like a law of aspiration working in other realms, then the whole force of Paul's words will be immensely increased. They will come to us illumined and enforced in a way which will give them a fresh sanction, and render impossible the denial of their truth.

I

NATURE'S PRAYER

FIRST, then, let us turn in our search to Nature and see if in its processes anything

analagous exists. No one need seek long in Nature's realm before discovering that there is such a thing working there, and not only that, but working as one of the most triumphant of laws. Take a tiny seed, for instance, and drop it into the earth. What do you find? You find that the moment life quickens within it it begins to aspire. Immediately it begins to struggle upwards. By an inevitable law of its being it begins to push its tiny blades through the dark earth, twists itself round obstructing stones, reaches at last the welcome light, and still aspiring reaches higher and higher until it has attained completion.

But this is only an illustration of what is going on everywhere in Nature. Sixty years ago the world was startled by the discovery of the law of Evolution. To many it seemed—as to many new discoveries always do seem—to threaten existing belief, and to dethrone both God and man. But like all truth, instead of lowering man's conception of either, it has immeasurably increased it. For what is this law of Evolu-

tion ? Rightly considered it is the Law of Aspiration. It is God's law speaking in the heart of all living things saying, "Seek the things that are above." And the whole vast history of Creation as it unrolls itself before us in the stupendous book of cosmic struggle and change, reveals to us a vast, unending struggle *upward*. As we look back upon the countless æons of this world's history we see in the stupendous changes through which it has passed the fulfilling of this great and triumphant law. The whole Universe, with all that it contains, from the highest forms of existence to the lowest, is straining and stretching in an unending effort to reach higher. From the first moment that life appeared upon the globe until now that struggle has been going on. Every cell, every seed, every plant, every flower, every insect, every animal, by a law of its being, aspires toward higher forms of life and being. Through all the ages this has been going on, to the end of time it will continue ; never for a single moment does it cease, or can it cease.

“Every clod has a stir of might,
An instinct within it that reaches and towers;
And, grasping blindly above it, for light,
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers.”

This is the law, and to fail to respond to it—and Nature has repeated failures—for any cell, or seed, or plant, or living thing to fail to aspire, is for it to deteriorate, to sink, to die. Aspiration in the natural world is thus a law of Life—it is also a law of Salvation.

II

ASPIRATION IN HISTORY

LET us turn next to history—to the history of man's life upon the globe. Here the same imposing and stupendous law confronts us. Looking over the long vista of human history we are struck by its incessant changes, by the rise and fall of nations, by the uprising and dissolution of empires. To the thoughtless these changes may appear as a meaningless confusion, but we have been taught to regard them as the results of unending law.

Through all the coming and going of nations and of men humanity has been groping upward, ceaselessly aspiring, its affections set upon things above, not upon things beneath. Gradually, as the result of this, there have been emerging higher forms of political, social, and civic life ; we see the slow consolidation of races, the growth of ideals, the education of the race in morality and religion, the emancipation of the mind from debasing superstitions, the ceaseless effort toward higher forms of being. Compare, for instance, the change which has come over this land of ours in two thousand years. Two thousand years ago it was inhabited by a savage people who offered bloody sacrifices to appease the wrath of malevolent deities. Now it is inhabited by a highly civilized race, while its magnificent cities are adorned by buildings which venerate justice, righteousness, and truth. What has made this change possible ? It is the existence of a voice in man which ever keeps saying to him—“ Seek the things which are above ! ” it is an inward impulse which will not let him rest

in things as they are, but which constantly incites him to emerge and seek to reach higher; it is the fact that at the core of his being Aspiration sits enthroned. And if the movements going on around us are to be understood they must be approached with a firm grasp upon this truth. The reasons men give for the social and economic unrest which are the characteristic features of our own age are often pitiful in their blindness and inadequacy. The deep dissatisfactions of to-day are the best things in it and not the worst. They are man's response to the clamant voice within which will not let him rest amid cruel wrongs and unjust inequalities, but which ever keeps repeating—"Forward out of darkness, forward into light!"

Science calls this "the evolution of the race," and we have got into the habit of using the word "evolution" as if it were a dead mechanical force. It is nothing of the kind. It is a living aspiration. It is the divine instinct in everything which makes it grope upward toward God in an unending

posture of entreaty. Every cell, and plant, and living thing, which is true to itself, lifts up its hands, and joins in this unending prayer :—

“ Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee ! ”

But History does more than testify to this universal posture of entreaty, combined with universal effort to reach upward. It writes upon every page this startling truth—that as long as a nation prays that prayer it is safe. Aspiration is a law of Salvation in nations as in plants. But where a nation ceases to aspire, it ceases to live. The nemesis which befalls it is the loss of vision ; it is smitten with moral blindness—the deadliest of all diseases which can befall a people ; for, as the prophet declares in one of those flashing sentences which express a universal truth, “ where there is no vision the people perish.” The shores of Time are strewn with the wrecks of nations which, through setting their affections on material prosperity, lost the power to aspire, and so were cast off by God. And men have

walked the streets of their cities warning them of their doom, pouring into the heedless ears of their rulers their insistent appeal :—"Seek the things that are above ! Set your affection on things above, and not on things beneath ! Aspire ! Aspire ! lest your heart grow corrupt, and ye be rejected of God." This is the cry of all the best men the world has known, for the world is saved, not by its kings and plutocrats, but by its prophets and seers.

III

FOLLOWING THE GLEAM

WHEN, now, we come back from those vast regions in which we have been wandering to the words of St. Paul "Seek the things that are above," we find them charged surely with fresh authority. Many people seem to think that the truths of religion are based upon flimsy speculations which they must accept with their eyes shut. They are noth-

ing of the kind. The principles of religion are set in the heart of the universe as well as in the heart of humanity, and can only be denied with the eyes shut, and of this fact the law of Aspiration is a profoundly impressive illustration.

Here, then, the text throws up two kinds of men. The first man has his affections set exclusively upon the things beneath. He never prays, he never acknowledges God, he never seeks to own Him or worship Him, he has made the world his God, and has set his affections wholly upon it. And what the Bible has to say, and what all Nature and all History have to say about that man's life is this—that it is a gross violation of the laws and intentions of Almighty God respecting it. To that man—the man who has ceased to look up, who has made the world his God, whose soul has ceased to aspire—the whole Universe arises and says, “You are writing your own doom.” The cells, the germs, the living things in Nature that cease to aspire, cease to live; they slowly perish; God has no use for them;

they menace the progress of the world; they thwart the purpose of their Creation; they do despite to their own nature; they set themselves in defiance to the will of God. And what is true of the lower is true no less of the higher forms of life, only with man, the responsibility and the doom are greater. Let no one doubt, therefore, what the fate of the man who has made the world his God must be. It is not that there is a sudden blast of destruction, but there is a slow withering of soul, a sapping of the vital forces which make man a spiritual being. This process of deterioration can be seen in the worldly man here and now, and no one is more conscious of it than the man himself. He has moments when he knows the truth about himself, moments when he knows more clearly than any human voice can tell him that the way he is pursuing leads to death.

What then is clear is this,—that God has only room for one ultimate type of man. The fittest alone survive in the spiritual as in the natural world; and the fittest is he


whose affections are set upon things above, and who ever struggles to reach them.

Browning, in his pathetic lines entitled "The Lost Leader," deals with one of those men who turn worldlings, who barter the eternal things for a mess of pottage, one known to him who broke "from the van and the free-men, and sank to the rear and the slaves." Listen to his scorn as he declares how the army of the Lord will do its work, but without him :—

"We shall march prospering—not thro' his presence,
Songs may inspirit us—not from his lyre ;
Deeds will be done—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch, whom the rest bade Aspire.
Blot out his name, then ; record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod ;
One more devil's triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God."

Never were more blazing words of indignation written by poet's pen than these over the man who in the contest of life has proved false to the best in himself, false to the noblest things around him, who with the best before him has wilfully chosen the

base, and who by ceasing to Aspire has allied himself with the forces of evil, and of retrogression.

Turn now to the second type suggested by the text—those who set their affections on things above—and instantly you are in the companionship of the best men the world knows. It is not claimed that the Christian man is all that he ought to be, far from it, but there is one profound thing that can be said about him—he is ascending. For every man who has the spirit of Christ in him, by the very law of that spirit **ASPIRES**; he seeks to become better; he has the upward look; he laments his failures to attain with tears and importunities; his arms are outstretched toward God. This is the triumphant thing about the Christian man; it is this which, uniting him to the whole sweep and purpose of the Universe, gives him the promise and presage of victory. And this is the message that Dicksee gives to his age in his beautiful picture called “The Ideal.”  It is the picture of a youth who has climbed up a steep ascent, and

with infinite difficulty has reached a high and jutting peak. His eyes uplifted are full of the fire of aspiration; his arms are eagerly outstretched. High though he has climbed he has not yet attained. In the wreathed mist in front of him there is a Figure which he strains to reach, but which has left the earth, and is rising toward the heavens. It is the prize of the "high calling in Christ Jesus" that he seeks to gain, and that he will gain if he continue following.]

This then is the supreme fact about every Christian man, he aspires. Whatever his defects may otherwise be, it yet remains true that as long as his arms are thus outstretched he is a child of God, he is an heir of eternity, he is "in tune with the Infinite."

And this is the attitude which you who read this must make the characteristic of your life. Pray to God that you may never become a worldling. For you that would be the most shameful thing that could befall you. There are men and women who began life like you—seeing visions, dreaming dreams, stretching out their hands

in longing, their hearts soft with gentleness, their eyes uplifted in love, who now have sunk down into sordid complacencies, and who sneer at their youthful enthusiasms. These people may have got on in the world, they have made money, they have reached what they set their hearts upon gaining, they have bartered their souls for success, but their lives are held up to you now that you may regard them, not with admiration, but with horror. These are they who have made "the great refusal." Say to yourself, "I shall never live a life like that. I shall never feed my soul upon husks." Say that and keep to it at whatever cost ; for to lose the vision is to lose life itself, is to become irrecoverably old, is to die to all the precious things of life. Believe in the ideal then ; set your affections on things above ; follow the gleam, as Tennyson in his old age sang to hearten his young brethren, and to cheer them onward :—

" There on the border,
Of boundless Ocean,

And all but in Heaven,
Hovers the gleam.

Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Not of the starlight.

O young mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel
And crowd the canvas :

And ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow the gleam."

All the great men, all those whose names shine in history, and who have enshrined themselves in human hearts, have "followed the gleam." And they all unite with Paul in entreating us to follow it, to set our affections on things above, and not on things beneath. "I am nothing," said Watts, the greatest artist, and one of the noblest men of the nineteenth century, "but I aspire. The only thing I possess, and I never remember the time I was without it, is an aim

toward the highest, the best, and a burning desire to reach it."

"What is left for us," says Browning, the greatest poet, and one of the greatest thinkers of the nineteenth century,—

"save, in growth
Of soul, to rise. . . .
From the gift looking to the Giver,
And from the cistern to the river,
And from the finite to Infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity."

Listen to those voices. They come as the richest treasures of man's wisdom, and the richest experience of his spirit. They unite in declaring that aspiration is the law of life, of progress, and survival.

IV

THE EXALTED CHRIST

ONE question remains. Where is the goal toward which we must aspire? Paul answers it. "*Set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of*

God.” Christ has left the earth, Paul means, to be in Heaven the centre and goal of man’s spiritual aspirations. It was because of this that “it was expedient for Him to go away.” Christ in the spiritual sphere is what the sun is in the natural. Every little plant and flower, we have seen, aspires ; it seeks the heavens, it holds up its hands toward the sunlight beseechingly, and then the sunlight sends down one of its blessed rays into its heart, and draws it up. The aspiring life in the plant is nourished from above, finds its strength and response in the warmth and beneficence of the Sun in the heavens. And this is what happens with the believer. He aspires ; he lifts up his soul longingly toward Christ ; and this aspiration is answered from above. The contact of the soul with Christ is so certain that the slightest aspiration toward Him is met with an instant response. Our feebleness is met by His Almighty Strength. As we lift up our arms He bends down His and draws us upward, and nearer.

Let us be careful, however, that we clearly

realize what this aspiration means. It does not mean reclining at our ease, and making pious resolutions. It means struggle, and dauntless effort; if "Excelsior" is to be our watchword then we must set our affections on things above, and *climb*. At Chamounix, on a stone which marks the grave of a guide who perished in ascending the Alps there are written these three suggestive words:—"He Died Climbing."

To be victorious over the world does not mean that we shall never stumble nor fall: that is impossible. It means that after every fall we shall rise undaunted, undefeated and undismayed; and climb, and keep on climbing and *Die Climbing*.

THE LAW OF COMPENSATION

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.—LUKE xvi. 25.

THERE is no statement more often made, or more widely accepted, than that we live in an unfair world. It is unfair, men say, because it is a world of favouritism, of unequal rewards and punishments, in which the evil escape and the good are left unrewarded. Even the pulpit seems to have largely accepted this view of the unfairness of things, and one of the most popular arguments in favour of a world to come is based upon it. The rewards and punishments here are so unjust, it seems, that Heaven is required to readjust them, and set the balance straight.

At first sight this text seems to support

such a view of the world, and the world to come. Dives had his good things in this life, Lazarus evil things ; in the life beyond, however, the conditions are reversed, Dives has now the evil things, Lazarus the good. But it is impossible to accept this material view of either this world or the world to come. Dives did not find himself in torments in the next world because he was rich in this, but because he abused his riches ; Lazarus did not repose in Abraham's bosom in the next world because he suffered in this, but because he endured suffering. The reason in both cases is spiritual, not material ; it has to do with inward character, not with outward condition ; and until we learn to view the world from its spiritual and not from its material side, then our whole vision, and our whole theology must go wrong.

Now is it true that we live in an unfair world ? Is it true that the unscrupulous prosper and the conscientious are impoverished ? that judgment is not executed in this life ? that we need to bring in a life to

come to believe that justice will be done, and the unequal balance straightened? Is it true that some have everything and others nothing? Had Dives everything and Lazarus nothing? Is it true that evil in this world ever escapes, and that good is ever unrewarded? or that in this world Dives escaped, and Lazarus was unrewarded?

No! we are prepared to declare that it is not true. It is not true that a fair investigation of the facts of life discloses that the world is built on favouritism, that we require to transfer the judgment-bar to the world to come to believe that justice will be done. *Justice is being done, here and now, to every man.* Instead of ruthless unfairness, or indifference to moral issues, we see that a great compensating balance has been let into the structure of the world. We see that this compensating balance seeks ever to adjust things—not according to a ruthless favouritism, but impartially and beneficently for the good of mankind. We see that there is a law which, if it gives with the one hand, takes with the other; that calls

upon us to choose, and holds out to us both hands, but which warns us that we cannot choose both ; which gives to every man something, but to no man everything ; which says, “ If you choose the pleasures of one world you forfeit the joys of the others ” ; which says, “ You cannot serve two masters, but according to the Master you serve so shall your wages be ” ; which says that if you rob you enrich your pocket but impoverish your soul ; that if you suffer for conscience’ sake you are poorer in pocket, but richer in character. It is not held that this law of Compensation strikes a perfect balance, this is impossible—since it is constantly checked by the unfairness of man himself, but it strives at least to strike that balance, and it is in the world to remedy unfairness.

Let us see now how this law works.

I

NATURE'S COMPENSATIONS

FIRST of all then we discover the law of Compensation working everywhere in Nature.

And here there is no evidence of favouritism. The South has its beautiful climate, its gorgeous colouring, its easy life ; but it has also its miasmas, its fevers, its agues. The North has its cold and bitter wind ; but it has its splendid vigour and strenuous life. Which do you choose ? Neither has everything, each has something ; you can have the one or the other, but you cannot have both.

Turn to the animal world. The elephant has strength but it has not the swiftness of the stag, the stag has swiftness but it has not the strength of the elephant. The one has tusks, but the other has horns ; neither has everything, both have something. The hare is swift and the tortoise is slow, but the one has a shell to defend it, the other has not. The spider can spin, but it cannot fly ; the dog can run, but it cannot climb ; the fish can swim, but it cannot walk. Everywhere something, nowhere everything ; but everywhere the law of compensation.

Turn now to your own life. Do you want the pleasures of health ? then you must take

exercise. Do you want the pleasures of idleness? then you cannot have health. If you choose the one, then you lose the other. Do you want to grow in knowledge? then you must work hard: if you prefer ease, then you cannot have knowledge. Do you want to succeed? then you must sacrifice many pleasures. Do you prefer the pleasures? then you cannot succeed.

Take now what you possess. You have not everything! No! but you have something. You are weak in body! Yes, but you may be strong in character. You are not clever with your tongue! No, but you may be with your hands. You are not swift of foot! No, but you may be swift in mind. God has not given you beauty of face! No, but you may have a beautiful soul. You have not a long pedigree! No, but you may have a kind heart. You are not brilliant! No, but you may be generous. You have not everything! No, but you have something. There are many things you have not got that others possess! Yes, but there are many things which you

possess which others have not got. You have not so much as others! No, but if added to what you have you possess a grateful heart, you need not envy kings. What right have you to complain? None. Count your blessings! If you have lost much in your journey through life, you have also gained much. You have lost the sweet innocence of childhood? Yes, but you have gained the buoyancy of youth. You have lost the buoyancy of youth? Yes, but you have gained the experience of middle-age. You have had great losses! Yes, but you have learned great lessons. Would you never have experienced trouble? Then you would be a bankrupt in life's deepest experiences. Have you shrunk from the contest and the struggle after holiness? Then you have gained ease but missed the prize of life. Have you fought a good fight? Then you will gain the crown.

Or look at it from another side. Are you harsh and despotic? Then you will get your own way, but no one will truly serve you. Are you selfish? Then you will get more

than others, but what you gain with the one hand you will lose with the other. Are you proud? Then many will bow down to you, but you will be secretly despised. Are you ill-tempered? Then you will be feared, but not loved. Are you generous? Then you will often be cheated, but more often blessed. Are you unselfish? Then you will be poorer in possession, but rich in human affection. Have you sympathy? Then often your own heart will be crushed, but you will lighten the hearts of others. Is your heart set on the riches of the kingdom of Heaven? Then do not expect to gain the riches of the World.

Tell me then what you have, and I will tell you what you haven't. Tell me what you have lost, and I will tell you what you have gained. God never takes without giving, never gives without taking. Everywhere there is the law of compensation.

II

LIFE'S REPARATIONS

WHEN now we begin to regard the operations

of this law we see beneficence in the very heart of it. It strives we see to repair, to make up for losses, to readjust adverse balances, to compensate the afflicted. Here, for instance, is one born into the world blind. How terrible is such an affliction, how heavy is the handicap ; nothing can take the place of sight, but the law of compensation strives at least to put something in its place. See how it develops the touch, the hearing, the sense of sound and distance, until you can hardly believe the sight is gone. Lose one limb and Nature will pour all her strength into the other, so that while it is not equal to both, it is more than half. It is as if Nature said in sympathy with the sufferer, "I cannot restore the limb, but I will help you, compensate you by adding strength and dexterity to the one that remains." Or look at it from another side. You encounter some great bereavement which robs you of one whom you love. Yes ! but your sorrow calls out the sympathy of others, they surround you with their love, and you learn for the first time how tender is the human heart,

and how rich you are in your friends. Or you have met with some great disappointment which seemed to shake the very foundations of your being? Yes, but even then this beneficent law sought to repair the ravages your disappointment made. You were driven in upon yourself, and back upon God, and you learned lessons then, or ought to have learned them, such as no other experience in life could have taught you. Or you fell ill, and came very near the gates of death! Yes, but you learned to value life at its true worth, or ought to have learned it, and that is wisdom which it is worth paying much to gain.

All this, of course, may be frustrated. We may refuse the compensations of God. Loss may only harden us, death bring bitterness and enmity, but for this we cannot blame any but ourselves. Those who accept the compensations, who learn the lessons, who bend to the divine will, are never impoverished by any loss. They gain in the priceless things—in patience, in submission, in trustfulness, in the blessedness of unselfish

love. Are these things nothing ? Are they not to be counted as compensations ? When we make up the balance of our gains and losses, at what figure will you estimate a disciplined will, a chastened heart, a meek and quiet spirit ? And if gain here, as elsewhere, comes through the agony of loss, why should we complain ? We cannot gain without losing, and if we are to gain the great things, we cannot and ought not to expect that the loss will be small.

Everywhere, then, we see compensations. Sorrow in the night, but joy coming in the morning ; every gain a loss, every loss a gain ; knowledge gained, but long hours of study given ; earnest endeavour compensated by strengthened character ; sloth and idleness repaid by weakened body and brain. Behold, then, a law which knows no favouritism, which is scrupulously just, yet tenderly beneficent ; which strives to make up for every loss, which if it gives also takes, which will permit to no man everything, and which extends to every man something.

III

RE-ADJUSTED JUDGMENTS

It may be well for us now to examine a little more closely some of those inequalities which arouse indignation at the character of the world, and which form the main charge against it of unfairness.

The chief source of indignation arises from the differences between the rich and the poor. The rich it is said have everything, the poor nothing.

Now that such inequalities do exist in our modern social conditions is only too painfully evident. Any argument based upon a denial of these inequalities would be met, and deservedly, with derision. In dealing with this problem, however, we require to preserve our mental balance. Much of the abject poverty around us has no right to exist. Responsibility for it lies at the door of social and economic conditions which are an intolerable blot upon our civilization; and these social and economic conditions arise from man's own

nature—from his rapacity and greed, his unscrupulousness and cruelty. It is “man’s inhumanity to man that makes countless thousands mourn.”

But all poverty cannot be explained by evil conditions. “The poor ye have always with you,” said Christ, and there is an unequal distribution of talent which will always produce an unequal distribution of means.

Now were the inequalities of social well-being, and the rapacity and greed of man unrestricted by any higher law, then the conditions of life would be terrible indeed. But it is just here that we see the law of compensation coming in, ceaselessly striving to moderate these differences and inequalities, and striving to make up for loss in one direction, by offering riches in another.

Is it true, then, that the rich have it all their own way in this world? that Lazarus had nothing of his own, even though he was a beggar at the rich man’s table? Is it true that the only compensation offered to the poor is a hope that hereafter there will be a re-adjustment of the intolerable

wrongs from which they suffer here? Is this a fair statement of the case? May there not be another point of view which makes the differences less acute? Surely there is.

And this other point of view immediately emerges when we ask, if the material is the only standard for measuring riches. May a man not be poor in the world's wealth and an aristocrat in the Kingdom of Heaven? May a man not live in a poor house and yet know that it is a Temple of God? May a man not eat plain fare, yea, even beg for crumbs at the rich man's table, and yet feed at the Table of the King of Kings? Why should we always degrade life by applying to it only the standards of material prosperity? as if the happiness which comes from it were the only happiness which the world has to offer. The riches of God, we know, are not in silver and gold, but in mercy, and truth, and righteousness. Well, have none of these things any value for us? Are our appetites, our senses, our ease, and self-indulgence to be for us the only, or

even the highest standards of enjoyment ? What right have you to judge me by the number of courses I eat at table, or the number of suits of clothes I wear, or the amount of house rent I pay ? Have we fallen so low in our own eyes that a man's happiness is only to be measured by what he eats ? Let us have done with this fooling. It is an insult to our humanity. It reveals the appalling shallowness of our popular judgments.

But none the less shallow are many of our popular representations of Christianity which degrade it into a mere system of future rewards and punishments. Christ's statements " Woe unto you that are rich ! Blessed are ye poor," have been represented as meaning " Take your fill now, you that are rich, you will pay for it hereafter." And to the poor, " Have patience, you will get your fill, by and bye in Heaven." All this is degrading and false. Not that Heaven is to be ruled out of count in estimating ultimate issues. The canvas of this life is too small for destiny to complete its work. But the

whole emphasis of Christ's teaching was on the value of religion for men here and now. The woe and the blessing are not to be projected into the future only. The Kingdom of Heaven is within you, said Christ, in the character it weaves in you now; in the compensations it gives to those who sacrifice all for it; in the new dignity with which it enswathes a human life however outwardly poor or despised.

The true standards of judgment come then, not from anything without, such as the amount a man has to eat, or the way in which he is clothed, but from the regal dignity of his character, or the poverty of his soul.

Now the compensations of poverty are that it offers conditions in which these great blessings of inner freedom and unmolested spiritual vision may best be attained. No language of Christ's is more laden with solemn warning than that in which he warns the rich of this very danger of wealth—that it tends to blind the eyes to the true issues of life. And he has had but a poor and superficial acquaintance with the world

who has not had this borne in upon him again and again with blinding force. Every step a man takes in the accumulation of wealth he takes a step in the accumulation of responsibility. He holds it only in trust from God to use it for His glory, but every time he uses it falsely he automatically robs his higher nature ; he pauperises his soul ; the spiritual thermometer of his life runs down. And the temptation to do this is so great that Christ speaks as if it were almost impossible to resist. Nor has it become easier to-day. With the possibility which the rich man possesses of gratifying almost every sense, how hard is it for him to retain that supreme humility of heart without which man cannot see God ; and surrounded as he is every day of his life by adulation it is only by a terrible struggle that he can keep his soul unspotted from the world, and sit in daily contrition at the Feet of God. It is the peculiar characteristic of worldly wealth to obscure those high experiences of the soul which give to life its supreme compensations.

Now poverty, though it has its own temptations, carries no such terrifying penalties. In this sphere the poor may be said to be Blessed. Just because they are untouched by subtlety and artificiality of mind or heart, so do they live more simple and natural lives, and standing thus in nearer relation to essential truth, they respond more swiftly to it. Their sins, though coarser than those of the wealthy, are less spiritually deadening; they remain more child-like in spirit, and so are more easily reached and won for Christ.

For a confirmation of this we need only turn to the Gospels. Few were the rich who followed Christ. Not many rich, not many mighty were called. One of the most pathetic stories of the Gospels is of one who went away sorrowing, "because he had great possessions." And it was this very incident that called from the lips of Christ those words of grave warning as to the spiritual dangers that wealth incurs. On the other hand, those who were his daily companions, and those who followed Him most closely,

were recruits from the ranks of poverty ; and while the Christian Church has to thank God for the lives of many who have great possessions, it still remains true, that “to the poor the Gospel is preached.”

Wide, then, as the differences were between Dives and Lazarus, it must not be thought that there were no compensations. The compensations came from within. Could we have seen the heart of each it is possible that even here we might prefer to be the poor man rather than the rich. For in the one case riches had brought ruin within, while poverty with the other had at least not been a bar but an encouragement to righteousness.

IV

SPIRITUAL LOSS AND GAIN

LET us now enter the spiritual sphere. Christ comes to every man and says : “ Whom will you serve—the world, or me ? You cannot serve both : you must serve

one. The conditions of the world's service are easy, its pleasures are great, they are the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life. But by reaping those pleasures you lose the joys of the spiritual. Each has its compensations. You cannot have both. On the other hand the conditions of the higher service are hard. If you want the higher then you must be prepared to forsake the lower. You must be prepared to crucify the flesh, to take up the Cross and follow Me, to deny self. These things are not easy. You must be prepared to watch and pray; to fight against temptation; to deny yourself pleasures that others, who do not seek the higher, indulge in. You cannot have the prizes of both. If you choose the higher, then there are compensations. You lose much, but you gain more. You have to bear a Cross, but you gain divine strength to bear it. You have to deny yourself what others gain, but you gain what others are denied. You lose in worldly pleasure, but you gain in character, in purity, in tenderness, in loftiness of feel-

ing, and in goodness of life. You are cut off from the pleasure-seekers of the world, but you are joined to the invisible company of the Redeemed ; you have to tread a narrow path, but it leads to life eternal. Choose. Remember that there are compensations, prizes on both sides. If you would save your life then you lose it ; if you lose it for the sake of the higher, then you find it. Every right choice gives you something, and denies you something, and so does every evil choice. By indulgence you gain the lower, but you lose the higher ; by sacrifice you gain the higher, but you lose the lower. Both you cannot have." What right have you to complain, then, that the evil have their pleasures ? or that they have got what you haven't ? Would you have the compensations of both ? This you cannot have. " No man can serve two masters." We are each receiving the wages of the master whom we serve. We may change ; we may repent ; we may wander as prodigals into the far country ; or we may arise and go to our Father ; but we are all at this

moment receiving our compensations according to the Master we have chosen.

Why, then, should we call this an unfair world? In the spiritual sphere, at least, we get what we work for. There is no need to put off to the world to come the day of reckoning. We are each day of our life reaping the rewards of our service. Here is a man who seems to have everything that the world can give—wealth, houses, carriages, every delight of the senses and appetities, and he makes these his God. Men say sometimes in the supposed interests of the spiritual, “Yes, but he is not happy.” Why should we think so? There is a delight in these things—not all the delight that many think, yet a delight that is intense and intoxicating; and the man who indulges in these things gains this delight. And why grudge it to him? Why complain that such a man goes rollicking through life, sipping everywhere from the cup of this world’s pleasure? Do you want to change places with him? Then you must take his soul also; you must

turn your back upon all spiritual joys, and become dead to them, dead to the desire for them, dead to the understanding of them. You must be willing that the higher part of your nature should become a blank, and that you should go through life as ignorant of it as if it had no existence.

Take the other side. Here is a man who has wasted himself in the service of his fellow-men. He has none of those other pleasures. He has sacrificed himself in many ways. He has fought the enemy within, has often been cast down, is often in dejection about himself. He has fought the enemy without, and has got little thanks for it; has had to endure the world's scorn, as all who give themselves for it have. Consider carefully this man's life. Look long and earnestly upon it. That man has his compensations. They are hidden away in the secret of his heart, but oh! how rich they are and deep! That man is one of the saviours of the world. And he has in his heart, the purest, the most blessed of joys—the joy of conscious communion

with God. Look long at this man, and when something of his spirit invades your heart, solemnly make your choice. Christ holds out to you the right hand and the left. Choose the right, and choose it now, and choose it for ever.

V

THE FINAL RECKONING

IN all that has been written we have restricted our view to this present life, and purposely eliminated the workings of this law as they project themselves into the world to come. But do not think for a moment that in any true judgment of life's final issues the world to come can be eliminated. Human destiny is too great to work itself out on so narrow a stage. To see life's final issues, and to receive a final justification for its laws, we must roll up the curtain of Time, and gaze into Eternity. And this is what Christ does for us in this parable. When that curtain rises, and we

are enabled to peer into the things that shall be, we see wealth and opportunity squandered bearing its terrible retribution of woe. And over that lurid Hell, which is the evil-liver's destiny, there are written for us to read these tragic words :—" The pleasures of the world are but for a season." On the other side we see patience, and faith, and goodness realizing that goal which seemed to be denied them here, but the treasures of which they all the time secretly possessed. There, in that happy Paradise of the Blessed we see the despised servant of Jehovah walking with the saints, and all the holy angels of God. And over this celestial and radiant region, the gates of which are of pearl, and the streets of pure gold, is written this beautiful promise :—" The treasures of the righteous are everlasting." There, in that other world, to which we hasten, the law of compensation works itself out in its ultimate completeness. With this picture before us the call to choose comes with renewed earnestness. We have all made our choice, but we may have chosen

wrongly—evil instead of good, the world instead of Christ. God in His mercy permits us, while the day of grace lasts, to choose afresh. How long or how short that day may be is hidden from our eyes. The urgency to choose aright, therefore, is great. Choose while it is to-day ! Choose Christ !

And let us have done with petty complaints. We live in a great world ; and life is a great enterprise.

THE LAW OF SANITATION

For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.—*MATT.* xxiv, 28.

IN the vast progress made during the past century, nothing has been more marked, or more beneficent, than the progress made in sanitary science. A hundred years ago one-eighth of the population of the great cities lived in cellars, almost without light, and seldom dry. The supply of water was exceedingly defective, and was so impregnated with impure matter that it was little less than poison. There was no drainage system, and ventilation on any scientific principle was unknown. The average life of a working-man was twenty-two years, and it was estimated that in England thirty to forty thousand lives were annually lost through ignorance of sanitary laws.

Now all this is changed. It is not necessary here to give a history of the change, but it is enough to state that the first concern of every enlightened municipal authority to-day is to perfect the conditions under which the people live, to enlighten the people themselves as to the laws of sanitation, and to seek by every means to safeguard the health of the community. Vast as are the changes which have taken place, and great as have been the benefits, these nevertheless may all be said to rotate around one fundamental axiom, namely—that corruption pollutes the atmosphere and endangers the health of the community, that in the interests of the public, therefore, corruption must be removed.

The latest discoveries in sanitary science, however, give an interesting revelation of how Nature herself grapples with the problem. Nature it is seen does not remain impassive and allow corruption to remain. She employs, on the contrary, a vast army of scavengers—if the term may be permitted—to prey upon the corrupt mass, to

ceaselessly work until it is removed, and so insists that the atmosphere will be kept pure, and the world wholesome. The latest method in sanitation, indeed, is based upon this beneficent intention of Nature. Man co-operates in bringing the insanitary mass to her so that she may employ her infinite resources in destroying the poisonous germs, for *wheresoever the carcass is, there are the eagles gathered together*. Old as this proverb is, therefore, it still may be taken as a homily on the latest methods and discoveries of sanitary science.

The illustration itself is borrowed from the East. Along the dusky face of the desert a caravan is seen to wind its long and sinuous way. Slowly and patiently the camels struggle along, until suddenly the whole line is thrown into confusion. One of the camels, which has been lagging for some time, drops down exhausted, and lies with its load stretched out upon the burning sand. Every effort is made to resuscitate it, but in vain, and so it is dispatched, or left to perish. Then the caravan moves on, and disappears.

Above is the blue azure, and around the endless stretch of sand, with not a sign of movement of life. No sooner, however, does the caravan proceed, than a mighty vulture falls straight down through leagues of air. Far up in the azure sky, beyond the reach of the keenest human vision, it has been hovering, watching with ravenous hunger and piercing eye every movement of the caravan beneath. But it is not the only denizen of those lonely heights. Far off another watcher has noticed its swift descent, and soon from all parts of the horizon, called by some strange instinct, the eagles gather and swoop down upon their prey, until in an incredibly short space of time, nothing is left upon the desert but a few whitened bones.

To the ordinary traveller nothing is here but the instinct of the vultures satisfying their hunger in a revolting orgy, but the touch of Christ lifts the whole incident into the height of a spiritual law. These vultures are Nature's agents; ravenous and revolting to our eye they are yet ministers of the

Most High. They declare in Nature's voice that God abhors corruption, and that He will not permit it to remain. And Nature as His servant is ceaselessly employing her agents—birds and beasts and insects—in keeping the world clean and pure and wholesome, destroying everything corrupt, that the poison of its corruption be not instilled into healthful lives. Over all the world we see now a beneficent operation of cleansing. God's purpose with regard to the world is that it be kept in health, and man is called upon to be a fellow-worker with God to effect this divine purpose.

I

HEALTH AND HOLINESS

THE subject has now assumed a wide and deep significance. The word "sanitation" comes from the same root as the words "sane," "sanity," which mean "sound," "healthy." But health means "wholeness," and wholeness is just another word for

“holiness.” The law of sanitation, therefore, in its root meaning, and in its moral and spiritual significance, is a Law of Holiness. This law, which insists that the world shall be kept clean, which seeks to destroy corruption in the interests of purity and the preservation of life, is not to be limited to the narrow area of public health as we generally accept the term. What we suffer from in this particular is a narrowness of outlook. There are thousands of men around us who are pioneers in sanitation as it concerns the city, and who are immensely concerned about the perils of infection, who utterly fail to realize the implications of that law in the working of which they claim to be experts. For the law declares that corruption, wherever it is found, whether in nature or in nations, in the individual or in the community, in the physical or moral life, is dangerous, and must be destroyed in the interests of health and holiness. It not only declares this but acts upon it, for wheresoever the carcase is, in whatsoever realm, there are the eagles gathered together.

When now we turn to human history we see that it is a long and illuminating homily on this text. Take, for instance, the workings of this law in the history of nations. When a nation is young and strong, when it is fired by hope and national ideals, when it struggles earnestly to fulfil its destiny, then it is healthy and uncorrupted. But there comes a time in the history of every great people when the wealth which it has accumulated, and the power which it has won, threaten its stability. Then the nation is tempted to settle on its lees, to grow indifferent to its destiny, to satiate itself with the spoils of the past, to grow luxurious, pleasure-loving, and slothful. If this spirit get deep-seated in a nation's life then it opens itself to all kinds of immoral infection; it loses that healthy vigour which wards off disease, and with an enfeebled vitality gradually becomes a prey to corruption. Then the words of doom are written in fire upon its walls "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,"—"Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." No nation perishes

thus without warning: war, pestilence, famine, defeat, the voice of prophets, of patriots whose hearts are uncorrupted, and who see the approach of the avenging host, mingle in warning and appeal. And where the heart of a people has not waxed altogether gross there often come repentance, and a renewing of the nation's life. Where however, these voices fall upon unheeding ears then the day of grace ends, the eagles sweep down upon the carcase, and soon nothing is left but a few bleached bones.

II

ISRAEL AS AGENT AND VICTIM

OF the workings of this law in the domain of national life the history of Israel offers a startling illustration. The Israelites were used, to begin with, as a cleansing agent in purging a district whose population, through

its corruption, had become a menace to the world. This destruction of the Canaanites has often been represented, by those who traced only the surface facts, as an act of barbaric and unjustifiable cruelty. The method of warfare belongs to the age, and has to be judged by the conditions then existing, but the justification of the act lies embosomed in this law. And the supreme value of the Old Testament is this, that it is a record of national biography, written not from without with dates and events as its chief factors, but from within, and as a revelation of the moral factors which determine a nation's life. The Israelites, then, as they are ushered into history, are not seen as a mere predatory band, in search of conquest, and attracted by Canaan's fertility of soil; beneath these surface facts they are seen as the menacing hosts of the Most High. They appear when the iniquity of the Amorites was full, when the heart of the inhabitants of the land had become so foul that destruction became a moral necessity. And this is Scripture's

explanation and justification of the strange mutations and solemn vicissitudes of fortune with which its pages are filled. Beneath all the seeming haphazard of events there works the inexorable law of sanitation. The devastation of the Flood is not represented as the result merely of natural law or of caprice. "God saw," we are told in Genesis—and here the law of Sanitation first appears—"that the wickedness of man was great, and every imagination and desire of his heart was iniquitous, that the earth and all flesh was corrupt, and filled with violence." So the world had to be washed and made clean. In the destruction of Sodom, also, we have one of these moral revelations which open up the vast issues of life. At the entreaty of Abraham it was promised that if ten righteous men could be found in it the city would be spared. The presence of even that small remnant of righteous citizenship is represented as sufficiently powerful to ward off, for a time at least, the doom which follows corruption. But ten men could not be found, and the fire and brimstone are

only the agents of that law of sanitation whose righteous dealings with the world we are now considering.

But the sublime impartiality of the law appears in the subsequent history of Israel itself. Centuries move on, and we see that once proud and beautiful city, Jerusalem, laid in ruins, her holy Temple wrapped in flames, her streets dyed red in the blood of her people, while high over all are seen the victorious eagles of invincible Rome. But these eagles represent the sway of a power more potent than any possessed by man. Structurally the city was impregnable, but no walls, however strong, can keep out the eagles of God when a people has grown corrupt. And this was the nemesis that had overtaken them. They who once had been the purifying agents of the law of sanitation, had now, because of their iniquity become its victims. And of the coming of this hour Christ Himself had spoken with tears. He saw the moral corruption within the city, and without the hovering and importunate eagles. "There shall not be left

one stone upon another," He said in tones of anguish and of awe.

III

ROME'S DECLINE AND FALL

BUT not only in Scripture, but on the vaster canvas of world history, the immense impressiveness of this law may be studied. Rome herself in the decline and fall of her empire supplies an illustration on the vastest scale. Courage in manhood, purity in womanhood, the sanctity of the home, the supremacy of law—these were the virtues which supplied to the early Romans that endurance which made them invincible, and gave them a world-wide empire. The Eternal City appeared to men as indestructible as the hills upon which she was built, and Vergil in stately measure prophesied for Caesar an eternal sway. But with the decay of her morals, the growth of an almost oriental licence, and the deterioration of public life, corruption set in, and

continuing unchecked produced an appalling viciousness which threatened to pollute the world. Then when the hour of doom struck there suddenly appeared from all sides the menacing hosts of Goths, and Vandals, and Huns. They were the eagles gathering around the carcase, the agents of the law of public health. Enfeebled by their vices those last representatives of the great empire of the ancient world could only look helplessly on while the rude barbarians, whom they despised, ravaged their ancient Capital, pillaged their plains, and defiled their altars. No wonder that to that age, accustomed to regard that vast empire as inviolable, it seemed as if the world were about to end in carnage and conflagration, or that against the gloomy background Augustine should have painted as man's last hope, the white walls of the City of God. Looking back upon these events we see no longer meaningless devastation, but God saving the world through His laws of cleansing, calling up His eagles to destroy corruption, and to keep the world pure.

The workings of this law, we now can see, are so inevitable, so impartial, and so just, that we are forced to apply their test to our own national life. There are forces which make for a nation's defence mightier than Dreadnoughts, or than standing armies. There are others which make for national decay, and which, if not arrested, bring upon that nation the devouring eagles of God's wrath. And it becomes us who love our country ceaselessly to apply this test, and to lift up our voices in solemn warning. As a nation we have reached that stage of development the most dangerous of all in a nation's life. Our Empire is vast and consolidated, our commerce and wealth have reached dimensions unknown in the history of the world, and the sins which threaten us are insolence and ease. "Behold this great Babylon we have built," we are tempted to say while our eyes grow swollen with pride, and our lips become contemptuous and insolent. With this insolence there spring up that idolatry of material things, and that judgment by gross and material

standards, which breed an inevitable corruption in public life, and lead to national dishonour and decay. Or looking at our great wealth we are tempted to say, "Soul ! thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; eat, drink, and be merry," but God says, "Thou fool !" for with this sensual and material satisfaction there come a grossness of appetite, a weakening and slackening of a nation's life, and soon the repudiation of moral ideals in favour of an ease which will not think, and which drowns its senses in the sensual satisfactions of the hour. Never was there greater need than now for men to arise who can read the signs of the times, men of unselfish patriotism, fearless and uncorruptible. There is a growing recklessness around us, an increasing luxury of living, an increasing number of idle and dissolute rich, an idolatry of material interests, and a repudiation of high ideals, which in every nation of the past have been the precursors of decay. Almighty God will not spare us if we allow these things to eat like a cancer into our national life. And

if they be not unrepented of they grow, grow until repentance becomes impossible and until destruction becomes an act of mercy and of cleansing.

IV

THE SANITARY LIFE

It remains for us now to apply all this to our individual lives, for the laws which operate in the history of nations operate in the experience of the most humble of men.

No one can read Scripture intelligently without realizing how close is the connection between health and holiness. God everywhere insists that we shall live sanitary lives. And human experience joins with revelation in warning us that wherever corruption appears, there are the eagles gathered together. Take for instance the effect of persistent sin upon the body. "Sow to the flesh," says Paul, "and of the flesh you reap corruption." This is the frightening fact in human experience regarding sin. What-

ever our theology may make of it, experience tells us this with unwavering voice—it corrupts. The sensualist, the drunkard, the immoral liver is not allowed to enjoy the fruit of his sin without penalty. The weakened cells, the unnatural craving, the diminished vitality, open his body to the attacks and ravages of disease. As a consequence his life is shortened. “The wicked live not out half their days,” says the Psalmist summing up the normal facts of life. Nature hurries them to the grave. And it hurries them to the grave because they are insani-tary. Their bodies are corrupt. And where corruption is, there are the eagles gathered together.

The same is true of the hidden life of the soul. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die,” is one of the most solemn statements of the word of God. Such a soul cannot be allowed to live lest it become a source of infection, lest it breed contagion amongst the healthy, and become a menace to the blessed purposes of God that His people shall be holy. And this law projects itself across

the dim valley of death into the life beyond. That separation which Christ says is to take place in the world to come, the placing of some on the right hand, and others on the left, is effected under the law of sanitation. Heaven is the home of the healthy. "Who shall ascend up into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in His holy place," asks the Psalmist in one of these great moments when man is drawn to face the most solemn questions of life. And with amazing spiritual intuition he perceives that only the sanitary can reach those heights. "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart . . . he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." And on the other hand, robbed of all its oriental imagery, what is Hell represented as in Scripture, but the place of the unclean? and what are its fires but the cleansing agents of God? There corruption is swept. There, in that banished land, the lurid flames are lit to devour it. And between its disease-infested area and the healthy regions of Heaven a great gulf is

fixed, lest the holy be infected by its diseases, and Heaven itself be smitten by its woes.

The consideration of these solemn facts should constitute in all serious minds a grave warning. Wherever corruption is, there we see are the eagles gathered together. Before the inevitableness, the impartiality, and the beneficence of this law, all our objections fall to the dust. We are forced, even though we suffer by it, to acknowledge its justice and righteousness. For the eagles gather, not as the enemy of man, but as the enemy of corruption. They gather as the agents of a beneficent law which seeks to maintain the world in health and wholesomeness.

And the law applies with equal force and impartiality, we perceive, in the realm of the spiritual as of the physical. There is a corruption of the mind, of the imagination, of the soul, and where there is corruption there is not only the decay within, but the exhalation of disease without. The corrupt tree bringeth forth *evil fruit*, it cannot be allowed to remain, therefore; it must be

“hewn down, and cast into the fire.” What Nature is working at in her struggle against evil is the prevention of contagion. The sinful man is not only his own enemy, he is the enemy of the human race. Being unholy, he is unhealthy, he is an agent of infection, and a menace to the world’s health. If he continue in sin then added sin means a growing corruption, and around him there gather the destroying eagles of God.

With such a law working in the world it is not surprising that Christ should have come into the world to teach men how to live sanitary lives. And His own life is a revelation of a life lived in perfect healthfulness. “The Prince of this world cometh,” He says, “and findeth nothing in Me.” This is a declaration of a healthy life in terms of the latest ascertained knowledge. The germs of disease assailed Him, but found “nothing in Him” upon which they could fasten. There was no weak spot within, no lowered vitality; because of His radiant spiritual vitality He was able to walk in the midst of infection bearing a charmed life. And

the only way which keeps us safe from corruption is to keep in health. It is not by the use of fumigations and disinfectants that disease is best resisted, but by healthy vitality which offers nothing upon which disease can fasten. And the same is true in the pharmacopœia of the soul. The disease germs of sin are not evaded by hiding oneself behind encloistered walls, but by keeping oneself in health. If there is corruption within then the prince of this world will find us out. How then are we to become healthy? holy within? "Put off the old man which is corrupt," says Paul. This is the first act in regaining health—the casting out of disease. And the next is to open every door and window of our souls to the radiant vitality of Christ. "He that hath the Son hath life." And the power of this life to bring back health to lives which sin has corrupted is revealed in the noble declaration of Paul:—"You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins."

THE LAW OF ATTRACTION

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.—JOHN xii. 32.

ONE of the most momentous discoveries ever made, was the discovery of the law of gravitation. Before Newton's day Nature was conceived as a vast conglomeration of parts, each part living in isolation from the other. A glimmering perception of a unifying law haunted men's minds, however, even in distant times. Democritus and Epicurus among the ancients, Galileo and Kepler among the moderns, alike made guesses at the truth. It was left for the giant mind of Newton to bring order into the midst of this chaos. In the famous formula, "every particle in the universe attracts every other particle with a force directly proportioned to the mass of the attracting particle, and inversely to the square of the

distance," we have expressed for us the operations of a universal law. This law of attraction Newton discovered, not only holds the heavenly bodies securely in its grip as they revolve with the sun, it also influences the tiniest particles of matter. Every particle, it is found, attracts every other particle. If you throw a stone into the air it will fall back upon the ground again, because of the earth's power of attraction. Every one stone attracts another stone, although the attractive power exercised may be so minute that it cannot be discerned. Like also attracts like. Were all friction removed, a piece of iron lying at a distance from another piece, would unite with it. Every boy, too, has experimented in this realm, and has demonstrated to his wondering and admiring companions the power of his magnet to draw to itself a piece of steel greater considerably than its own weight.

Here, then, we are in the presence of one of these simple, unifying, and stupendous laws of Nature, which operate in things

great and small, which hold the mighty constellations in their predestined path as they rush through space, and which affect also the tiniest molecules of the body, and the smallest particles of matter.

I

ATTRACTION AS A LAW OF LIFE

Now without attempting to strain analogies, it will be apparent that a law of attraction operates not only in what we call the realm of Nature, but equally in the realm of human life and activity. First of all, looking at it in its broad operations, we see it forming the basis of human society. We do not live in isolation, each one apart, each self-contained and complete. There is in the world, and ceaselessly operating within us, a power which draws us together, an instinct which makes us feel out for companionship, a universal law which binds us together in a community of interests and affections.

Here, for instance, is a Church, and within this Church there gathers Sunday after Sunday a congregation of men and women. This congregation is made up of many types of men and women, differing widely from each other in social rank, in education, and in intellectual outlook. If you take any two men or women in this congregation and compare them, you would find immense differences—differences so great that only a very powerful impulse would enable them to forget these, and unite them in mutual sympathy and concord. And yet this is exactly what happens. What is then this impulse which proves so powerful a unifying force ? It is the law of attraction. Men and women are drawn here by a common impulse ; they are attracted here by something which this place has to offer them, and for which their hearts crave. A Church, therefore, becomes the centre of attraction for devout men and women ; they gravitate there by a law of their being.

Or regard, for a moment, the complex society around us, with all its vast and in-

tricate commerce, and its varied life. Think of the number of professions, trades, industries, callings, there are. How is all this carried on? How are these different occupations supplied with workers? How is it that one follows one pursuit, another another? The answer is—by the law of attraction. One man is attracted by science, another by commerce, another by art, another by music, and so on. And what we mean by that is, that there is resident in science, in art, in the sea-faring life, in a soldier's career, a certain attractive power for certain persons, so that they are drawn to one or other as by a powerful magnet.

Or take the workings of this law in a more intimate and personal realm. Here are two persons who meet each other for the first time. They come from different homes—they may come from different lands—but they meet, they are attracted to each other, they become friends, and this friendship lasts throughout life. Or the bond may be deeper and more sacred still. "It's a deep mystery," says George Eliot, "the

way the heart of a man turns to one woman out of all the rest he's seen in the world, and makes it easier for him to work seven years for her, as Jacob did for Rachel, sooner than have any other woman for the asking." It is a deep mystery; it is the mystery of attraction in personality. No one can create it, or explain it. Why we are attracted to one calling, and not to another, to one person, and not to another, is hidden away in the profound mysteries of being; but the law is there affecting each of us, and is profound—influencing and moulding our life at this very moment. Our pleasures, our amusements, our recreations, our studies, the books we read, the friends we meet, the life we live, are all determined by the pulling force these have for us. Something in them corresponds with something in us, so that the law of attraction operates, and we are drawn to them, they to us.

No less true is this when we pass from the realm of the social, and intellectual, to that of the moral affections. There is something in all the great things—truth, justice,

mercy, self-sacrifice—which, when we see them, exercises a drawing power over our hearts. When we see the matchless beauty of a pure life, when we see its triumphant victories, we long to possess it, our hearts are conscious of being drawn to it. But evil also possesses its subtle attractions, and it is the conflict of these two forces which constitutes life's most tremendous problem. The one draws us from above, the other from beneath, and it is upon the issue of this conflict that our weal or woe is determined, both for time and for eternity. Thus through all the path of life we are conscious that our lives are being attracted by one thing or another, that it is this subtle law which unites all Creation, which draws man to Nature, to his fellows, and to God; and which enriches his life with its manifold interests and affections. Without this, life would be poor indeed.

II

THE ATTRACTION OF PERSONALITY

WHEN, now, we turn to examine the various

attractive forces which play upon human life, we see that the mightiest attractive force the world knows is the force of personality. Certain persons possess this to a remarkable degree, and by it they not only attract others, but dominate them. When men and women come under their spell their lives are changed, their habits are changed, their character is changed. They form their lives on the model which fascinates them; their wills are made subject to the will of the person who thus so strongly attracts them. History is full of instances of men who swayed the lives of thousands, who set up in others by the force of their attraction for them what almost constituted a new personality. Such dynamic lives were Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon; and there have been many others of lesser power, great leaders, and orators, whose will was law to multitudes, and whose words were irresistible. We read of such men to-day with interest, but they do not otherwise concern us; they are names in history, and their personal magnetism dies with them,

while their influence has long ceased to sway the hearts or minds of men.

There is One solitary instance, however, in history, of which this is not true ; One Whose magnetic influence is felt across twenty centuries ; whose influence instead of diminishing with time increases with it ; and who exerts a sway over the human heart of which history can afford no parallel. "It was reserved for Christianity," says Lecky, "to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of centuries has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love, and has shown itself capable of acting upon all nations, temperaments, conditions ; which has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but also the highest incentive to its practise." However far men may differ in their theological opinions, or separate themselves from those who are His avowed followers, none can deny the matchless attractive power of Jesus Christ. Men who disagree on all other subjects, agree on this. "Whatever be the unlooked-for phenomena of the future,

Jesus shall not be surpassed," says Renan. Into Goethe's cold and remote heart there steals an unwonted glow when he speaks of Him of Nazareth. "I bow before Him," he says, "as the divine manifestation of the highest principle of morality." John Stuart Mill can hardly be quoted as a defender of orthodox Christianity, but he can be quoted as one who came under the magnetic spell of Christ. "Whatever else is taken away from us," he says, "by rational criticism, Christ is still left. Not even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life." Hazlitt in his essay on "Persons one would wish to have seen," puts into the lips of Charles Lamb what thousands of others who have abandoned the traditional faith would devoutly admit. "There is only one person I can ever think of after this," continued Lamb, but without mentioning a Name that once put on a semblance of mortality; "if Shakespeare were to come

into the room we should all rise up to meet him ; but if that Person were to come in, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of His garment." No other name so interests or agitates the world as that of Christ. Were books to be written on all the influence He has exerted, the magnificent hyperbole of St. John would not be too strong : " I suppose the world itself would not contain the books that should be written." And the books that have been written regarding Him so far out-number all others on any other person, or subject, that even the most unwilling is forced to admit that the attractive force of His personality is at once the most tremendous and absorbing fact in history.

But if such acknowledgments are wrung from the lips of those who are not His avowed followers, what may we expect from those who are ? To millions the name of Jesus is " the sweetest name on earth." For them the absorbing question is—" What would Jesus have me do ? " To Him they turn as a child to his mother for comfort

and for love. As the magnet draws the thing magnetized, and holds it to itself, so the heart of the believer is drawn and held by Christ. Thus attracted, his one ambition is to lose himself, lose his old personality, and find himself in Christ; lose his own will that Christ's will may become his. Under the Christ-spell his life becomes changed; nay more, it becomes transformed into the likeness of Christ; Christ in him, not anything belonging to himself becomes his "hope of glory." Here, then, is the law of attraction operating at its highest. In Christ there must reside something which has for man a drawing power which no other has ever possessed in a like degree. When we get to know what that is we discover the mightiest attractive force that the world possesses.

III

THE ATTRACTION OF LOVE

WHEN now we ask—What is the secret of the amazing attraction of Jesus Christ for sinful

men and women?—there is only one answer—it is His love. The greatest thing in the world is love. There is nothing which draws so irresistibly as love. So universal is its sway that no one can be indifferent to it. The loving heart is the most powerful magnet the world knows, and the heart that loves the best is the heart of Jesus Christ. It was this love which drew the outcasts and the needy to Him long ago. They had been so accustomed to be treated as vile that they came to regard themselves as vile. But to their unspeakable amazement Jesus treated them as sons and daughters of God, and this while revealing to them through His spotless life the awful depths of their own depravity. Even while His purity smote them, His love drew them to Him. They saw love in His eyes, they felt love in His touch, they heard it vibrate in His accents, and so something awoke in them which raised them in their own eyes, and which drew them to Him in passionate longing.

It is so still. Love is the only word that sums up the life of Jesus, and that explains

His deathless attraction. He loved men. He loved all sorts, young and old, rich and poor, and the haggard and the loveless He seemed to love most of all. And He loves still. The difference between the influence of Christ's life, and that of all others who have lived is this—that Christ's is living, because He is living, while they are dead.

The supremacy of Christ's attractiveness, therefore, is His power to awaken love, and this through the consciousness that He loves. Perhaps the most difficult thing for the mind of man to believe, and the most potent when conceived, is that God actually loves him. That God should despise me, is evident; that He should love the good, is apparent; but that He should love all men, me included, is hard for the mind of man to conceive. Yet it is true, and the pledge of it, which man now can never lose, is the love of Christ. The most soiled and begrimed life, walking the city streets, may pause in the midst of his or her misery, and remembering Christ, say :—"There is still One who loves *me*."

Of His power to attract the universal heart of man Christ Himself is conscious. "I, if I be lifted up," He says, "will draw all men unto me." He is not only conscious of it, He uses it; He not only uses it, He refuses to use anything else. His only method of saving men is by drawing them unto Himself. He will have nothing to do with force; He will use no means to drive men to His side; the only compulsion which He trusts is the compulsion of love, the drawing power of affection. He draws us by His life lived in perfect accord with the Father; He draws us by His words in which we are made to realize the true nature of God; but most of all He draws us by His Cross, for there we see love's inmost heart. The Cross draws as all self-renouncing love draws, and by drawing us to God it reconciles us to Him. For reconciliation is no formal or forensic act in a hard legal process. It is the natural result of being drawn nearer to God, for the nearer we are drawn to Him the more naturally do we yield to Him; a new and happier life opens up to us, and there

falls upon the soul a blessed sense of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In this way, then, we may see this law of attraction mount up until it becomes in Christ the mightiest spiritual force in the Universe ; until we see, far above all principalities and powers, the sacrificing love of God in Christ drawing all men to the Cross.

IV

ATTRACTION AND CHARACTER

It may be possible for us now to focuss the results we have reached upon our lives, and see what lesson we can derive from them.

There are two facts which experience in life enforces, and which immediately confront us. First we see that we are surrounded by a vast number of things possessing powers of attracting us ; to some of these we find that we have a natural or hereditary disposition to yield, while others affect us but slightly, if at all. And this we find is true of others. We are not all attracted

by the same things, nor are we to the same extent ; life, in this respect, shows infinite variety ; but every human being feels the pull in one direction or another. There is another discovery we make which is of vast importance to us. To begin with a thing may have little attraction for us, but by frequent indulgence we find that we can so increase its power as to make it a determining factor in our lives. On the other hand this may be reversed, a thing having great attraction for us diminishes in its powers of attraction by neglect. Each day of our lives, therefore, we are feeling the force of certain attractions and are either yielding to them, or rejecting them. By this ceaseless exercise of our free choice our characters are being determined, since every choice tends to strengthen or weaken the correspondences within to those attractions which are around us.

Here, for instance, is a public-house with its glaring lights, and its offer within of intoxicating pleasures. One man passes it without a single glance, without the slightest

consciousness of its attractive power ; another struggles to pass it, but cannot. He is drawn irresistibly within, and when he comes out he is a subject fit only for pity and for tears. Or here is a Church ; one man passes its open doors without a thought of entering, and without the slightest consciousness of attraction ; another enters with swift feet, and with a radiant heart. What is it that makes the same place throw a spell over one man, and not over another ? It is a correspondence within. Each man has yielded to the attraction which each place possesses, and by yielding, the power over him—either for good or evil—has increased. And we are building up these correspondences every day of our lives. It may well be that at one time the public-house had an attraction to the person who now passes it without a glance, and that the Church possessed once a joy to the other who now has lost it, but who feels the glare of the public-house irresistible. The change has taken place not in these two places, but in these two men. Their attractive force is

just the same as before, but the individual is not the same. He has been setting up fresh correspondences between them and himself, forging ever new links which bind him to the object of his choice, and through which these attractive forces can operate with ever increasing power.

When we turn next to examine ourselves and the things which attract us, the one terrible fact which confronts is—the fascination of sin. Sin is a word of vast dimensions, its presence in the world constitutes the world's most sombre and insoluble problem, but its presence in the heart is the one subject of importance to you and me. And what I know, and what every one knows is that sin, my sin, possesses a terrible fascination for me: that this fascination persists against all my better judgment, my knowledge of its hatefulness, of its cruelty, and of its curse. Whatever may be our theology about sin, about God's attitude to the sinner, or about sin's penalty, this at least is clear—sin is self-destruction. This is a fact of experience which permits of

no discussion, we know this to be so, and for any sane man or woman that knowledge ought to be enough. The strange and deadly thing about sin, however, is this—that though we know it is destroying us we continue sinning. It has for us the fascination of the flame for the moth, it allures and then consumes.

As the foolish moth returning,
To its Moloch, and its burning,
Wheeling nigh, and ever nigher,
Falls at last into the fire,
Flame in flame ;
So the soul that doth begin,
Making orbits round a sin,
Ends the same.

And the reason of this deadly fascination is that by setting up correspondences in our nature with a particular sin we learn to love it. It is love debased, turned downward instead of upward, set upon a thing unworthy, yet nevertheless possessing all the powers of love to attract, to fascinate, and to overwhelm. A miser loves his gold ; his eyes gleam as he digs his hands deep amid

the glittering coin ; he loves it so much that he cannot bear to part with it, and the more he yields to it the more enslaved does he become, the more irresistible becomes the fascination. And so is it with all sin ; by yielding we set up correspondences within until we are its hopeless slaves, held in the thralldom of its deadly fascination.

The question now arises—and it is one of the most serious in life—Is there for such a man any way of escape ? Here is a man who has yielded to sin until it now holds a deadly fascination for him ; can that be broken ? If so, how ? There is only one successful answer to that question, and it is this—evil can only be expelled by good ; a base attraction can only be destroyed by introducing a noble one. Here, for instance, is an illustration of what is meant. Robert Louis Stevenson tells a story of a young Englishman travelling in Spain, and of his receiving hospitality in an old castle. In the room which was given him there was a picture of a woman, and from the first moment the youth felt fascinated by

her face. The face was beautiful but sensuous, and gradually the evil in it bit into his brain, and set on fire his imagination. Being much alone, and knowing nothing of the inhabitants of the castle, he felt his mind continually returning to the woman's face, he saw her eyes as he lay in the dark, he felt her with him even as he walked abroad, and always for evil. At last she seemed to enter into him, to master him, and poison the very springs of his being, so that he was drawn to gaze upon her fascinated and undone. One day thus possessed by evil, in passing up the steps of the castle, he met a young and beautiful lady, the daughter of the owner of the castle, of whose existence even, he was ignorant. They exchanged a few formal courtesies, but in her face there was something so pure, in her eyes something so quiet and holy, that in a moment there awoke in the heart of the youth a sense of her rare beauty and charm. Passing up to his chamber with these feelings awakening within him, he entered it, and glanced at the picture on

the wall. Suddenly it appeared to him coarse and hateful ; its attraction withered in a moment, and fell dead ; the pure love had cast out the impure.

This is the spiritual history of the soul in relation to Christ. When fascinated and sin-possessed, conscious of our degradation, and miserable in heart, we lift our eyes and see Him, suddenly there flashes into our minds and hearts a vision of the beauty of holiness, a longing to have done with sin, and be like Him. Then in His pure Presence we see our sin, we see ourselves, we sink down in the dust in shame and self-abasement. And from the dust He raises us, to begin life afresh with Him. This is life's perpetual miracle, and blessed are they who have experienced it.

THE LAW OF ELECTION

Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.
—2 PETER i. 10.

IT is a curious illustration of the change which has come over theological opinion that this subject of election is practically banished from the modern pulpit. When now referred to it awakens but that sense of relief which is evoked by the sound of distant thunder, when the storm is spent, and is dying away in the distance. Yet to a previous generation this was a subject of awful import. The discussion of the “divine decrees” rent many hearts, and many homes, and drove many devout men and women to the verge of despair. The amazing excesses to which this doctrine was carried, and the deadly earnestness which it evoked, arouse only pity or scorn in an age which is too superior, or too indifferent, to interest itself in those august questions of God’s dealings with men.

In its doctrinal statement it declared that God, from before the foundations of the world, had elected some to eternal life, and had ordained others to everlasting death : that this predestination was independent of any worth, or lack of it, in the individual, and was ordained solely by the decrees of God, for the manifestation of His Sovereign glory.

This doctrine, held with tenacious insistence by some, evoked the most violent wrath and antipathy from others. It was not a belief that could be left alone, but one which goaded men to the most violent antagonisms.

First of all it was condemned as a slander upon the Fatherhood of God. For how could any one believe, it was said, in the love of One Who, solely for His own glory, sent millions of His created beings shuddering to Hell ? In the next place it was condemned as a slander upon the wide and gracious beneficence of the work and gospel of Christ, Who came to seek and to save the lost, and Who in His Father's Name, de-

clared that it was His Will that all should be saved. It was also condemned as a travesty of justice ; for not the most violently cruel or unjust judge on earth, it was said, would countenance such an outrage on human justice as this, without incurring the execrations of mankind. "The doctrine," wrote the poet Southey, who was in his day greatly exercised by it, "implies that an Almighty and All-wise Creator has called into existence the greater part of the human race to the end that, after a short, sinful, and miserable life, they should pass into an eternity of inconceivable torments, it being the pleasure of their Creator that they should not be able to obey His commands, and yet incur the penalty of everlasting damnation for disobedience." On all hands, thus, it was assailed with the most furious opposition, and condemned in the most violent terms.

It must be admitted, now, that while belief in this doctrine turned out many of the noblest saints, and many, as Froude admits, of the finest type the world has

known ; while it wrung from the heart the sweetest strains of saintly devotion, it was also strangely open to abuse. It drove many, on the one hand, to lose their faith in God. Convincing themselves, after long and painful introspection, that they were not of the "elect," they straightway gave up the struggle after holiness. On the other hand, many superficial beings, satisfying themselves that they were the "elect," and therefore safe from all future peril, made the doctrine of election serve as a licence for sin. It was this complacency which Burns in "Holy Willie's Prayer," made the subject of one of the most scathing satires ever written.

On the whole, then, it would seem as if the present indifference with which the subject is treated were justified. The doctrine seems as good as dead, and also incapable of resuscitation. All that seems left is to deride it and those who believed in it, and to congratulate humanity in getting rid for ever of so evil a spectre. A little reflection, however, will convince the most

careless thinker that this is not so easily done, that instead of dismissing the subject as the chimera of a diseased mind, we are forced to admit that election, in one form or another, is found to be embedded deep in the structure of the world, and deep in the history of human lives.

I

ELECTION IN SCRIPTURE

FIRST of all, ~~however~~, let us gladly admit that when we open the Scriptures and read the beautiful words of Christ's evangel, it is its freeness and graciousness which win our hearts. The tender welcome of Jesus is addressed, not to the elect few, but to the universal heart of man ; He offers rest to the weary and the heavy-laden, and flings the door of His mercy wide to all the sorrowful and dejected children of men. In His gracious declaration of the boundless love of God He shows that the sun shines upon the evil and the good, and promises that

whosoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. In sending forth His disciples, also, it is the universality of the Gospel, and its power to affect every human heart that receives it, which constitute at once its most startling originality, and its most gracious appeal. And when we turn to the Epistles it is the same fact which confronts us—that salvation is offered full and free to all who seek it in sincerity, and call upon the name of the Lord. So certain and unmistakable is all this that there seems no room for further discussion. The strange thing is, however, that we cannot rest here. When we open the pages of Scripture we find that the doctrine of election is there taught as clearly as the doctrine of free grace. Like two rivers these run side by side without losing themselves in each other. First the doctrine begins with an individual, then it widens to a family, then to a nation, then narrows down to a kingly family in that nation, then through prophets to Christ, then through Christ to Apostles. then through Apostles to a Church. All

These are spoken of in Scripture as "elect."

Here then we are confronted by a strange problem. These two seemingly antagonistic and mutually destructive doctrines—the doctrines of free grace and election—are met with in Scripture side by side. What are we to say? Which are we to believe? Which are we to reject? Or can these seemingly antagonistic doctrines be made to agree? If so, how?

II

ELECTION IN HISTORY

BEFORE attempting to answer these questions it may be well for us to pass out of the domain of Scripture and see if elsewhere there is to be found any evidence of the existence of what we may call election. And we need not go far until we find it. It stares us in the face in every page of human history. For if Israel was elected of God this is no less true of other nations. Many people seem to imagine that God interests

Himself only in those things which they regard as specifically religious, while other things He allows to take care of themselves. Such a view, however, is shallow and insular. In our conceptions of God we have confined His operations too much to contracted areas. If Israel was elected from among the nations to teach men the doctrine of the one true God, it is no less true that Greece was elected from among the nations to teach men to love beauty, and Rome to teach men to reverence law. Nor can we rest there. Every great nation possesses a gift, is endowed with certain great qualities. We as a nation are no less an elect people than Israel. We have been girt round with a wall of defence, we have been granted great privileges, we have been called to govern peoples, to carry to the ends of the earth the gifts of our civilization, and to carry to the disorganized and depressed the blessings of freedom and good government. Indeed the whole value of the Old Testament as history is that it throws light on all history, it is the least archaic and the most

modern of books, and what was said to Israel of old, can with as much truth be said of Britain to-day. What we have sadly lacked in connection with this doctrine then, seem to be breadth and sanity of outlook. Israel has been lifted out of history and exhibited as an exception instead of as an illustration of a great truth.

But no less true is this when we open the pages of biography. Hide from this fact as we will we cannot escape its confronting us. Just as nations are elected by God so are individuals. If Abraham, and Moses, and Paul, and Peter, were elected, no less unmistakably were Luther, and Knox, and Wesley, and hosts of others. And why should we rest here? Why limit election exclusively to religion? Are we to say that the word can be applied in the case of a religious leader, but breaks down in reference to a political one? Is there no election in the case of a great poet, a great musician, a great artist? Does the Almighty act on so exclusive and petty a plan that He can only interest Himself in what we call the

spiritual part of man, while all that which concerns his well-being outside of this He disregards? No truly emancipated mind could for a moment believe this. For Christ Himself has told us that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground" without God's knowledge, and so wide is the beneficent care of God that "the very hairs of our head are numbered."

Here, then, we find that this subject of election is no doctrine of a diseased theological brain, but a great law of life. Election exists everywhere in the world; has always existed; will always exist. It is one of the methods by which God governs the world, and because of this it is a law which will be found to work unflinchingly in all the relations of life for man's good.

III

THE LAW OF SELECTION

WITH this widened outlook let us now

address ourselves to the law itself, and see if it be possible to conserve our faith in the triumphant love of God in offering salvation full and free to all men, while at the same time making it square with this law of election which seems to annihilate it.

In attempting this it may help us to get rid of theological bias if we change the title of the law itself. Instead of using the word "election," which has become a word of evil omen to many, it is permissible to use the word "selection," with even greater accuracy. For this is what the law is and what we find in Scripture, namely, a law of selection; and this is what we find in the world—that God "selects" men.

Where men went wrong was in making this "selection" hinge on the mere arbitrary will of God. As a matter of fact the human reason can never for long be satisfied with such an answer. We want to know even from God why He acts as He does, and will not be silenced with the declaration that He is Sovereign and can do as He wills, and that He does this or that simply for

His own glory. For man wants to be sure that it *is* for His glory, and cannot be convinced that a doctrine which seems to empty Him of all sense of justice could possibly glorify. And this ceaseless interrogation which is in man God Himself has planted in him, to save him from that somnolence which is death, and from the tyranny of his fellows, and to make the quest of truth the most absorbing of his life.

Now when we turn to Scripture we see that God selected special men, and a special people, and what we want to know is, why were they selected? On what grounds worthy of God, and of a moral universe, is this selection made? And the answer which Scripture gives is satisfying and final. God selects men not for His own glory, not for their own sake, but *for the sake of others*. It is the means He uses for the world's education and salvation.

Abraham, for instance, was selected. But why? Simply because of the arbitrary will of God, Who because He is Sovereign can do what He likes, and therefore despotic-

ally takes one man and lavishes blessings upon him independent of his worth, while the others He discards or neglects ? This is a monstrous caricature of the nature of God, and of the law we are considering. Abraham was selected so that "*all the nations of the earth might be blessed in him.*" In a degenerate age he was called to come out from amongst abounding iniquity, and make a new start in the world's progress upward towards truer conceptions of God's Holy Being, and His dealings with men. And this is true of all others, of Moses, of Joshua, of the prophets, of Paul, and above all of Christ ; they were called "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." This great law of selection, too, is not only applied to Christ, it is used by Him to explain the very basis of discipleship :—"Ye did not choose Me, but I choose you, and appointed you, *that ye should go and bear fruit.*"

Instead, then, of declaring that God elects men, and that only the elect can be saved, the teaching of Scripture is that *God selects men so that through them the*

work of salvation may be hastened, and the world blessed. And this law we see working in the Church to-day, as indeed it is working in all human society. For God has given some to be apostles, some teachers, some evangelists. Why? For their own personal glory? For their own personal salvation? By the mere arbitrary exercise of His will, and for no explained purpose? No! But for "the work of the ministry, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we *all* come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This law as thus stated needs no justification, and no apology. It is justified by universal human experience, for it is applied by man in all the complex activities of life. Whenever there is work to be done, or an end to be attained, the law of selection is brought into operation.

Here, then, election and free-grace meet. God wills all men to be saved; He selects

men, chooses His instruments, for the work of salvation.

IV

ELECTION AND RESPONSIBILITY

WHEN, now, we take this view of election as a law of life, we see it not only saves us from degrading views of God's government, it saves us also from false views of man's responsibility. According to Calvin no reason could be given for the absoluteness of God's choice. He elected men before He formed them, and their subsequent destiny remained fixed, and independent of their moral fitness or unfitness. Locked as he was in the merciless bondage of his logic Calvin's heart rebelled at this inevitable inference. "I grant you," he says, "it is a horrible decree." It is, and he ought to have known that no "horrible decree" could be maintained as a decree of God.

When God selects a person, however, we can see He selects him for the service of others; He calls him to a great responsibility;

He lays upon him a heavy burden. Instead of election then securing for the individual thus elected immunity from all anxiety as to his destiny, it enormously increases that anxiety. All the men in Scripture who are said to have been elected of God groaned under the burden of it; they besought God to pass over them, to choose some other, not to make them the spokesmen of His message. That is why they pleaded their unfitness and enumerated their infirmities :—"Choose me not, I have but stammering lips." "Choose me not, O Lord God; behold, I cannot speak." "It is enough! Now take away my life, O Lord, for I am not better than my fathers."

The idea of the elect living careless lives, secure in their election, raised above moral responsibility as the favourites of God, is not only repugnant to the moral sense, it is falsified by every word of Scripture. The call of God meant to them the sacrifice of self. They were selected to bear the vessel to others, but it often wounded their own hands. And of this Christ is not only no

exception, His life is the supreme example. He came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister, *and to give His life a ransom for many.*”

But this law of selection, imposing upon the individual increased responsibility, and calling him to sacrifice himself that the object for which he was selected might be attained, is not limited to the religious sphere; it embraces every part of human life. In all departments of human activity we meet with men selected, fitted with special gifts, and through the possession of these gifts called of God to special service. In every case the granting of these gifts means a call of God. And the only way in which a call can become “effectual” is, by the receiver realizing the call, and obeying it. The reason gifts have been given we have already seen—that through them others might be blessed, and the salvation of the world more speedily accomplished. Wherever, therefore, we meet with special gifts or capacity, we may say:—“Here is a man elected of God. Here is a man endowed, and called of God to the service of his fellows.”

Look round the world, now, and see how this deepens and enriches life. Here is a man of great commercial ability, who has been given the power to amass wealth. Why was this given? That the man might pile up millions, and while enriching himself impoverish others? Or here is a man sent into the world with a keen brain, with an intellect that works like a rapier, and cuts with the keenness of a razor's edge. This man did not make his own brain. We have all our gifts from God. The gifts God has given to this one man He has denied to his brother. Why were they given to him, and not to his brother? That he might use them for his own glory? for his own enrichment? Impossible! These men are called of God for the service of their fellows. And gradually the greatness and beneficence of this law of election are dawning upon the world. Slowly the world is waking to the fact that the endowment of men means God's call to service, and that the denial of this obligation means the ruin of the soul.

Here, then, is where we have reached.

Election means God's call to a life of self-sacrifice ; and instead of conferring upon the individual immunity from responsibility, it immensely deepens it.

V

APOSTOLIC WARNINGS

To make our conclusions of real value we must now with seriousness and honesty of motive apply them to our own lives. And the first question we put to ourselves is this :—Has God elected us ? Now it is true that we may not have great endowments, but is it true that we have no endowments at all ? To some God gives ten talents, to others one ; but the parable teaches us that the man with the one talent could not claim lack of responsibility ; that the measure of his responsibility was the measure of his gifts. It would be difficult for any honest man to say that in the distribution of His talents God had left him entirely out of count. There is something in this law which comes

knocking at the door of every heart, and which says:—"I have elected you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit." Instead of the narrow and exclusive thing we have been taught to regard it, this fact of election is wide enough to embrace each one of us. There are therefore two dangers which confront us.

1. Though elected, we may refuse to obey.

Election does not mean the annihilation of our will; it does not reduce us to irresponsible machines. The election may come to you, but the fact that it comes does not guarantee that you will accept. Behind it there stands your personal freedom of choice; your power to reject. Saul was chosen, but he did not obey, and his life went out in darkness and eclipse. "Many," said Christ, "are called, but few chosen." Called, but not chosen! Invited, but self-rejected! Endowed natures, but mis-spent lives! Great gifts given, but recklessly squandered! Alas! is this not the sad history of many around us?

But there is another way in which we

may refuse—by using God-given gifts for our selfish ends. The world takes little heed of this, and on this account the danger is even more subtle. The clever calculating schemer who grinds gold out of the poor, who keeps his workmen at starvation point while he swells with his ill-gotten gain, is envied while he lives, and goes down to the grave amid the adulation of sycophants. “Verily,” said Christ, “He has his reward.” Realizing these dangers then, let us with manly courage and straightforwardness face them. “Give diligence,” says the Apostle with passionate earnestness, “to make your calling and election *sure* !” And we can only make our calling and election sure, when, hearing the call of God, “Whom shall we send ? and who will go for us ?” we stand up in all our weakness, and say :—“Here am I : send me !”

2. The second danger is that we shall mistake election for favouritism.

This was the sin of Israel. God elected them to be the door by which entrance could be given to all without ; to a share of their

blessings, but they used their election to close the door. Election they interpreted as privilege; the consciousness of being chosen instead of widening their sympathies closed them; it made them arrogant instead of humble, and exclusive instead of tolerant. "A single Israelite," said they, "is of more value in God's sight than all the nations of the world." Thus they were lifted up in pride, only to be at last rejected. The very blessings bestowed upon them they turned to weapons of destruction. The work of God goes on to-day, but Israel has no part in it. The heart of the people has waxed gross; she is wedded to her idols.

And this is a danger which all those to whom God has given especial gifts will do well gravely to consider. How easy it is for the man of intellect to sit in the seat of the scorner, and how vulgar and petty are his satisfactions! How blind he is to his own insolence, what pitiful shipwreck he has made of God's gifts in him, though he is the last to discern it! Sitting there with his scornful eyes, and biting lips, he is all the

time mocking himself ; could he only see what he is he might well die with shame. But he cannot see. He can pierce with cruel mockery into the lives of others, but he dare not look within. Think, too, of how easy it is for one to misinterpret the privileges of birth. With what haughty insolence many look down upon those who are socially beneath them ; how easily possible for them to mistake their election for favouritism. How hard for them to realize that every gift of God given to man, every privilege bestowed, is given and bestowed that they may be used for the sake of others, and that where this is not done, the blessing works destruction within us.

It will be well for us, therefore, to examine our own lives humbly and prayerfully. The most terrible temptation that besets the richly endowed is, that instead of their gifts leading them to a wider charity toward their fellows, and an earnest consecration of them to their good, they be used to embitter human relations by puffing up the nature in arrogance, in exclusiveness, and in pride.

The end of this is rejection by God. And the rejection is all the more terrible because of the height from which they may have fallen. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, long-suffering . . . And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

THE LAW OF IMITATION

Be ye imitators of God.—EPH. v. 1.

I have given you an example.—JOHN xiii. 15.

ONE of the recent discoveries in the realm of Psychology is the immense significance of Imitation. "For a long time," says a recent authority, "imitation was thought to be of minor importance, having prominence only in persons of little original power. Imitation was counted a mark of immaturity, children and childlike natures being almost the sole imitators. And to imitate is still, with many, accounted a cause of reproach. But one of the great doctrinal gains of recent psychology has been that we are all imitators to the very heart, that imitation is not the mark of the few and the weak, but is really a deep trait upon which we may, without exaggeration, say that society and morality itself depend."

Words like these show the immense importance of the subject we have on hand ; they reveal imitation to be a great law of life and character, and our task is to trace its workings, first in the lower realms of life, and so to lead up to its applications and implications in the moral and spiritual sphere.

I

MIMICRY IN NATURE

WHEN we turn our investigations into Nature's realm we see Imitation at work in strange and interesting ways. In a recent lecture delivered in London, Dr. Chalmers Mitchell drew attention to the strange variety of colours in animals, and traced these in a large extent to conscious imitation, the object of this imitation being self-preservation. It was shown that animals, to escape detection, imitated the colour of their surroundings, the polar bear being white, the mountain hare changing its colour with the changing seasons, and so on.

Those who have read Prof. Henry Drummond's *Tropical Africa*, will no doubt recall the intensely interesting chapter entitled, "Mimicry," in which he deals with the ways of African insects. "There are to be seen," he says, "creatures, not singly but in tens of thousands, whose very appearance, down to the minutest spot or wrinkle is a pose for a purpose. These insects imitate the colours of flowers, mosses, leaves, and even other insects so cleverly that it is almost impossible to distinguish the original from the imitation." The object of this imitation, for instance in butterflies, he thus explains. "There are certain butterflies," he says, "which because of some acrid and unwholesome juices in them do not make a pleasant meal for the birds who prey upon them. Nature, consequently, has given these insects a brilliant colouring to save them from unnecessary sacrifice, and to warn those who prey upon them against an unwholesome meal. The consequence is that other butterflies, discovering the immunity extended to their highly coloured brethren, imitate their

colourings so perfectly that they are able to fly about in safety under false pretences." Prof. Drummond tells of a native coming to him as he was sitting, and pointing to a wisp of straw upon his coat, saying "Chir-ombo!" meaning "insect." Drummond, took the grass in his hand, looked at it, and threw it away, when again the native pointed to it, and said, "Alive!" Taking it up he again examined it, but only managed, after the minutest inspection, to convince himself that this piece of dried grass was absolutely a live insect which had imitated Nature so perfectly that the difference could hardly be detected.

This instinct of imitation runs through the whole of nature, and we are only now discovering how vast a part it plays in reproduction and in the evolution of species.

II

IMITATION IN HUMAN LIFE

It is, however, when we pass from this

domain, and enter into human life that we begin to realize how immensely important Imitation is, and how large a sphere it occupies in our mental and moral development.

Beginning with childhood, Imitation, we see, is the first great educator in the awakening and training of our faculties. The first thing a child does, and the first thing it is taught to do, is to imitate. Here, let us suppose, is a little girl playing with her baby brother. Watch what she does. She will begin most likely by clapping her hands together, singing, "Clap, clap handies," or some other such refrain. Then she will say, "Baby do it." Baby looks up at her with his big solemn eyes as if pondering deeply this vast problem. The sister takes the little chubby hands in hers, and claps them together, making a slight noise, giving to her tiny charge at the same time a smile of encouragement. Then out of the deep abyss of consciousness there creeps into that dawning child mind the idea of imitation. With ponderous solemnity, and heavy effort,

baby widens his hands, and brings them together with a clap. The sister shouts with delight, baby gives a gurgle of deep self-satisfaction, instantly striving to repeat his success, and thus the first stage of that mysterious thing which we call the education of a human child has begun, to continue unceasingly through life, and only to end—as far as this world is concerned—with death.

When the imitative instinct once begins it goes on in earnest. For the next few years Imitation is to be the controlling impulse in the child's education. By Imitation the child learns to speak, to walk, to use its fingers, to play, to sit at table, to run, to sew, to knit, and to do the thousand other things done by its seniors. This is the most formative period in life. A child learns more in the first four years of life than in all the after years put together, and in these four years it learns almost entirely through imitation. The child then is copying its parents, its brothers and sisters, it is receiving impressions from its surroundings which are to accompany it through life. The tre-

mendous importance to a child of these early surroundings becomes apparent when, for instance, we read a statement like the following, made by one who has studied this subject carefully:—"Children through these early years 'copy everything,' evil as well as good, and are very quick to adopt the opinions and ways of acting of their elders."

The influence exerted upon one's character by imitation, however, is not limited to childhood, though it is in these formative years that its influence is paramount. Throughout the whole of life this imitative faculty is at work. We are all, consciously or unconsciously imitating, or being imitated by others. "Whether we like it or not," says Stratton, in a recent book on Psychology, "there can be no doubt that in our mental as well as in our physical life there is no possibility of isolation or solitary development. From our fellows we receive both good and evil, our fate, to a large extent, is in their hands." This shows how swiftly modern thought is drifting away

from an individualistic to a socialistic view of society. It is telling us that we are all bound together in the bundle of life, that the moral and social condition of those around us is of immense importance to us, since, if these are living in evil conditions, their evil throws hindrances in the path of all who desire and seek the good. Science is affirming as never before the profound axiom—that no one liveth unto himself.

When, now, we turn from these general considerations, and try to focus for practical purposes this strange instinct of imitation so deeply planted by God within us all, we see that it is of two kinds :—1. Involuntary ; 2. Voluntary.

III

INVOLUNTARY IMITATION

INVOLUNTARY imitation is that which we perform unconsciously through the influence or example of those around us. Such imita-

tion can be seen in its pronounced aspect, perhaps, within our homes, and amongst the members of our own family circle.

No one requires to have it pointed out how closely the members of the same family imitate one another. The likeness which we see running through the members of a family, which hitherto we have been inclined to ascribe almost exclusively to heredity, is now partly to be explained, we realize, by unconscious or involuntary imitation. Members of the same family can usually be recognized by their tastes, by some peculiarity in their walk, by some habit common to them, above all by some inflection or intonation of their voices. Friends, too, unconsciously copy each other, especially if there exist in either any striking idiosyncrasy. "I remember," says S. D. Gordon in one of his books, "my brother returning once after a prolonged absence from home. As we were walking down the street together he said — 'You have been going with Deeming a good deal.' Surprised I said, 'How do you know I have?' 'You just walk like

him,' he said. What my brother said was perfectly true. Our friend had a decided way of walking, and unconsciously I had been given to imitate it."

Of course it is obvious that imitation does not end in these external things, it goes deeper, and profoundly affects character and conduct as well. And this is a fact which ought to receive the greatest consideration and most serious attention of parents. No one can possibly overestimate the profound influence which parents can and do exert, either for good or evil, upon their children. It is not only such external things as your walk and your tone of voice which they copy, it is you—your ideas, your habits, your conduct, your language, your character—all these through unconscious imitation they are absorbing into their lives. This does not mean, of course, that a child does nothing but imitate, that it has no character, no individuality of its own. It has. Every child more or less chooses what he will imitate. Behind the instinct of imitation there is the mystery of personality. Even

in two members of the same family this distinction of personality will reveal itself. One child, for instance, will choose in play to imitate the action of a locomotive, the other that of a horse. One will be absorbed in the making of a ship, while the other will prefer a box of soldiers. While thus individual character, and predilection, and many other influences are at work, shaping a child's character, what is clear is, that imitation is perhaps the most profound and important of them all.

It is clear from the facts adduced that this ought to weigh in the minds of parents far more than it does. The imitation of children gives rise, for the most part, to amusement, since it has been too lightly assumed that this imitation only applies to trivial and external matters. But a child's imitation of those around him strikes deep into character, and produces often characteristics of the most distressing nature. Here, for instance, is a characteristic illustration. "A little girl, only thirteen months old, had already begun to imitate her father's frowns

and irritable ways and angry voice, and very soon after she had learnt to use his language of anger and annoyance. When three years old this little girl gravely said to a visitor in the house with whom she had begun to argue, quite in her father's style, 'Do be quiet, will you, you never let me finish my sentences.'” Let those who are irritable and bad tempered at home seriously consider such an incident as this. Who wants his vices to be perpetuated in his children? Who wants his evil nature to be sent down to succeeding generations as his legacy? Only the other day a governess came to the writer asking for advice, complaining that she could exercise no influence or control over the children under her charge because the parents quarrelled so much, and the father used such bad language which they repeated. What would such parents think if they heard the language their boys use when playing with their companions? How would the foul oaths, and the impure language, which they use, sound to their ears when rolled off from the lips of their own little children? And

do you think that they do not repeat such language? They not only repeat it but take a pride in repeating it. The boy who wanted to grow up so that he could "swear like his father," is no exception. The children of such a father do not use his language at home; they know better; but outside their vocabulary is his, they teach it to others, and think themselves men in doing so.

Of course this is only one side. Those who love and care for their children, who long and pray that they may grow up pure and honourable, who are conscientious and careful of their speech and conduct before them, may take this comfort to heart that their example cannot be in vain. A child copies the good more readily, let us thank God, than the evil. Its young heart responds more swiftly and spontaneously to it. It stands itself so much more closely to the kingdom of purity and light that the things which belong to it find a more swift and natural response in its heart. Only, the facts this law of imitation are bringing to light should make us still more alert,

and more conscious of the kind of influence which we may exert. And this applies not only to parents but to every one. However we may be situated in life there is sure to be some one who looks up to us in admiration, and who copies our way of life. This power is too precious to be lightly esteemed. It is one of the gates by which our life passes into immortality. Let us put a watch upon ourselves lest we sin against those whom we love, and injure them far more deeply than if we maimed them in body. It is the injury done to the soul which is the most terrible, and the most lasting, since death itself cannot efface it.

IV

VOLUNTARY IMITATION

THE second way in which imitation works is by voluntary action, that is when we consciously set up some one as an ideal, and aim at reproducing his life.

There is a deeply planted instinct in all of us toward what we term "hero worship." Rightly trained this accompanies us through life, though it is in youth that it is most in evidence, and it is one of life's most potent factors in the making of character. We have all had or have our heroes, people whom we looked up to with admiration, whom we put on a pedestal, and whom we longed to be like. When we analyse this instinct of hero-worship what do we find? We find that it is simply the law of imitation at work. At first a child looks up to its father or mother as a being possessed of all wisdom knowledge and strength. Later on, while affection for parents remain, this hero-worship is transferred to a brother or sister, or perhaps a Sunday School teacher. Any one who knows the relations existing between a Sunday School teacher and scholar knows how perfectly beautiful that relation often is. Later on the hero becomes some person in history, or in literature, or some prominent living figure whose opinions we espouse, and whose every action we passionately defend.

We place these before us in a sort of luminous mist, attribute to them qualities which no doubt they do not possess, at least to the extent we imagine, and their smile, their approbation, fills us with a sort of transport. We take their life as our pattern, and strive to live such a life as we think they would approve.

We see, then, how imitation continues as a potent force in life, and how profoundly it affects character. But as in everything else in this world there is a danger in it. Imitation has to be directed to a worthy object, it has to be watched and trained. There are thousands of young men and women being ruined to-day around us because of false values. They have the faculty of admiration and of imitation, but in their undisciplined lives they approve the things that are evil. They imitate not the virtues but the vices of those whom they admire.

The problem for each one of us is, therefore, how we make take this great instinct of imitation which God has planted so deeply in us, and turn it to the best use.

And there can be only one certain answer to this if we put it to ourselves in the form of a straight question. The answer is—Imitate the Highest. “Be ye imitators of God, as dear children,” says the text, and how more beautifully could it be said? All this early imitation, we now begin to perceive, is meant by God to educate us for this higher imitation. This is part of the divine method. We learn the rudiments of the great tasks in the kindly and protected school of home before we are pushed into the great arena midst the struggle and the strife. All these earlier lessons are there to train us to lay foundations so that when we face the great problems we are already trained by habit and instinct to understand and respond to them. They are all schoolmasters to bring us to Christ.

But another thing is clear. To stop short before we reach the imitation of the Highest is to thwart the purposes of God, and to annul the whole object of our earlier education. Imitation of those around us ~~is~~ valuable as an early preparation, but the heritage

of a human soul is so high that it arrests itself if it concentrates on any imitation at last short of the Divine, the Perfect. This truth may be illustrated from the history and practice of Art. Here is a youth who begins to learn painting. He imitates first one artist, and then another, and in the early stages of his training this is valuable, for he learns something from each. There comes a time however when that imitation has to be discarded. So far these have been schoolmasters to bring him to the Highest. He must now cast them all aside, and reach out toward perfection. If he remain a mere imitator of other persons' paintings his claim to be an artist will be denied, and his work will count for little or nothing. He has never attained to self-realization, and so sinks into the outer darkness. He is doomed to sterility. The same truth may be discovered on a larger scale. In the history of Art there is a period known as the period of decay. It followed the great days of the Italian Renaissance. Artists of that period believed that

painting had reached perfection in the great works of Raphael, Titian, and Correggio, and so, instead of working out their own salvation, they became mere eclectics, imitators, and copyists. The result was that Art perished, and has never truly revived since.

It is the same with conduct and with character. To imitate the sort of life lived around you will never make you what you ought to be, and what God intended you to be. You will never attain to self-realization; you will be doomed to sterility, and the qualities within you being given no opportunity for expansion will slowly wither away. To grow to your full stature you must imitate the Highest, you must seek perfection. You will not reach it, but the struggle will ennoble you as nothing else will, it will make you a "living soul." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect," is only another way of saying, "Be ye followers of God, as dear children." They each declare that self-realization comes only when, all lower imitation having done its

work, we reach out into the infinite, take God as our Ideal, and imitate Him.

V

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

How now are we to know what God is like, what God requires of us, in order that we may imitate Him? This is a question which must have an answer, and the answer of the Christian revelation is this, that for this very purpose God hath sent His Son into the world. In that great manual of devotion which has seized upon the heart of Christian men and women as no other book outside the Bible, Thomas à Kempis begins his first chapter with these beautiful words :—
 “ ‘ He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness,’ saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we are taught to imitate His life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened, and be delivered from all blindness of heart.” In Jesus Christ, then, we have God’s revelation of Himself, and experience has gone to prove that Jesus Christ has contents for human life which no

other possesses. No imitation of any other life, however noble that life may have been, gives to the heart of man complete satisfaction. To imitate Francis of Assisi, Luther, Wesley, or even Paul the Apostle, brings us down to earth ; to imitate any of these would produce probable eccentricities, and it would be to imitate men whose own defects are apparent. When we speak about the Imitation of Christ, however, the horizon expands into the infinite, we are conscious of no limitations, we reach in Him that Highest to imitate which means the expansion of every part of our being without the possibility of limitation. To all the appeals of the mind and heart of man for guidance and self-realization Christ answers in these final words :—" I have given you an Example," and the universal conscience has come to know that this is true. To imitate Christ—no one can conceive of anything higher than that.

But this raises a practical difficulty—How are we to imitate Him ? Here we must clearly distinguish between an external

and a real imitation. One frequently, for instance, has to listen to a charge such as this :—" You call yourself a minister, or a follower, or a disciple of Jesus Christ, and you say that you imitate Him. I say that you do nothing of the kind ! Christ went about without a purse, without a home above His head, without a place of rest ; He had no salary for His work, no settled charge, He devoted Himself entirely to His fellow men. If you were real imitators of your Master that is what you would do." All of which sounds very convincing, but is really very foolish. If imitation of Christ meant repetition of the external incidents of His life, then discipleship would be limited to those countries in which this was possible, and to the very limited number of persons who could make it possible. What such persons fail to perceive, also, is that one could follow Christ externally in all those things which he has enumerated, and yet not be a disciple at all. No true teacher asks from his pupil an external imitation. If he did he would not be a true teacher. An artist who introduces

a new epoch in Art draws around himself a band of devoted admirers, but he does not say to them, "Imitate my work, copy it line for line, and you will be my follower." He says with all the emphasis he can, "Don't do this. If you do you will be a mere empty copyist. If you want to be my disciple, and learn of me, then get possessed by my spirit, get imbued with my ideals, carry these out in your own work, and so develop your individuality, and do your life's work." And this is exactly what Christ says when He calls us to imitate Him. He does not say "Go about homeless and hungering," but "Be filled with my Spirit." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you." All true and reforming imitation must come from within.

Here then is the conclusion of all that we have written. You will never come to your own until you begin the conscious daily imitation of Jesus Christ. However without this you may appear to have succeeded, failure will be written over your life. There will be faculties which remain undeveloped,

talents buried in the sand, glorious work left undone, because you have focussed your vision on things which were transient, and have not taken the Perfect as your pattern. "We must love the Highest when we see it," but the tragic things of life are not its sorrows and its cares so much as the eyes that do not see, and the vision that is never lifted up.

It may be then that there are some reading these pages who are setting out on life's great enterprise. It is well and wise to take time for a moment's pause to survey the road. Know this beyond all questioning that the goal of effort can only be reached by following in the footsteps of Him who is the Lord of Life's highway. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life," are His true and beautiful words. Before you go further on the perilous pilgrimage make a covenant with Christ. Bend your stubborn knees, and do not rise until you know that you have relinquished yourself to the care and keeping of One Whom to follow is life's most perfect joy. Do this, do it without delay, and do it finally, and

whatever happens by the way life can never know for you defeat.

There are others who are striving to imitate Christ, and who find it hard, and who often tearfully and tremblingly are saying :—

How shall I follow Him I love ?

How shall I copy Him I serve ?

The answer is—Get nearer to Christ. You cannot imitate successfully at a distance. Have you ever watched a child at a copy-book ? At the top are the perfect words to be imitated. The first line is well done, because the line is near. The second is not so good because the line is further away, and because the child repeats the mistakes already made, and looks at its own line instead of that which is perfect. Line after line grows worse and worse as the distance from that which is perfect increases, and the eye loses its vision. That is true of your imitation and mine. We do not copy Him we serve because of the distance which intervenes. Get nearer Christ ! If you have wandered, return ! If you have fallen, rise again ! Refuse to be depressed by past failure ! Begin again the Imitation of Christ.

THE LAW OF NUTRITION

The bread of God is He that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. . . . Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life.—JOHN vi. 33-35.

THE problem of nutrition is said to be the fundamental problem of physiology. Food and life—these two things are inseparably connected. The first and greatest problem of living beings is how to sustain life, and that resolves itself into a question of food, for every living organism needs food to keep it alive. You cannot feed a stone, a statue, or a picture; these have no life, and therefore need no food; but you must feed a plant, an insect, an animal, a human being, because these are living, and life demands as its first requirement food to keep it alive. We may therefore accept this as axiomatic—All living things require food to maintain life; without food they perish.

The next discovery we make in this problem of nutrition is, that while all life requires food to keep it alive, all life does not require the *same food*. Food for one type of life will fail to nourish another type. All living things demand food, but they also demand to be fed with *food convenient for them*. A plant needs food, but you do not feed it on the same food you would give to a bird. The food that would keep a bird alive would starve a fish. The kind of food that would starve a lion would fatten a sheep.

When we come to man we find the problem of nutrition a more intricate one. Man possesses a complex nature. He has within himself not one form of life but three; he is a trinity in unity. First he has a physical life; second he has a mental life; third he has a spiritual life. All, according to the law of nutrition, require food to keep the different organisms alive, and all require food convenient to the class to which they belong. You do not feed the body, for instance, on language; when a man is starving he wants more than your prayers. The mind is not educated by eating a good dinner, nor is the body nourished by studying a menu

card. You cannot satisfy the spirit with logic, or keep it alive by studying mathematics. The food must be such as can be assimilated by, and such as can be nutritious to the form of the life to be fed.

Now God has provided food for each.

1. He has provided food for man's body. Nature is a vast storehouse, and ceaselessly pours forth on the lap of man a bountiful provision for all his physical wants. God gives us food in due season, and all the valleys laugh with plenty in the lavish love of the Creator. When the harvest season comes the fields are covered over with corn, the vineyards and orchards are filled with fruit, they laugh and sing. Nature thus ceaselessly works to preserve life. All that man needs to do is to co-operate with Nature. He becomes a fellow-worker with God.

2. In the next place God has provided food for man's mind. Through language He has given us power to communicate ideas, and has given us power to think; through the eye to receive mental impressions, through books to educate our faculties, through our ears to hear discourse, and sounds, and harmonies, through our imagination to travel

swifter than the lightning, through our daily intercourse and business to have those faculties sharpened through exercise. And all these things act as food for the mind, to keep it in healthy vigour, to make it strong and enduring.

3. But man has not only a physical and mental life, he has a life which reaches still higher, a mysterious life which we call the life of the spirit. In this he differs from all other living things. The higher animals have certain powers of mind; within a limited range they think, and can make their thoughts known. But man alone is conscious of possessing a spiritual life. Through this possession he is brought into communion with God, is able to realize His presence, to worship Him, and to know His will. This gives to man a strange and solemn dignity. It swathes his life round with mystery and responsibility. For this is man's chief glory—that he is able through his spirit to commune with God.

What then about this highest form of life? Does the law of nutrition apply to it? Or can it live without food? The answer of common-sense, and the answer of Scripture

is—it cannot. If the spiritual life is to be kept alive, if it is to live with full activity, then it must have food to keep it alive ; and it must be fed with food convenient for it—that is to say, spiritual food.

And again God has provided food for this spiritual life as for our mental and physical life. Our souls cannot be fed with material food, but they can be fed by prayer, by meditation, by the earnest study of God's word, by all healthy and pure literature, by public worship, and by the exercise of those attributes which belong to the spiritual life. But to us as Christians the supreme food for our souls is Christ. And Christ speaks of Himself continually as bread. "The bread of God is He that cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the world. . . . I am the bread of Life." To feed upon Christ, therefore, to eat of this Bread which came down from Heaven, is to receive spiritual nourishment, to keep the soul alive and in health.

I

CHRIST, THE BREAD OF LIFE

Now the question arises, Since God has

provided us with spiritual food in Christ, how may we receive this food? How does the spirit of man feed upon Christ? The answer is—by living in His constant presence. We all know how character acts and re-acts upon life; how two people who are drawn to each other, who live in each other's society, become influenced each by the spirit of the other. So much so is this the case, that it is said that people who live much in each other's society, gradually grow liker each other in feature as well as in character. And this influence is increased where deep sympathy exists, as in the case of teacher and pupil, master and friend, leader and disciple. No one can live in the society of a good man for even a few hours without feeling better. The man's influence is felt in every act and word. We all know that if we read a noble book, as long as we are in the society of the author we are uplifted; we are fed by him, by his noble and inspiring thought. The same thing applies to Christ. It is possible for us to live in His presence, possible because through our spiritual life we can apprehend His presence, though with the physical eye we cannot behold Him

near us. It is possible also for us to appropriate His life; we gradually think His thoughts, and do His deeds, and learn to trust ourselves to Him, and serve Him. Gradually those who become His intimate companions learn to put Him ever before them, and as they grow in love toward Him this becomes increasingly easy and natural. It is love's open secret. For if you love any one he is never far from your thoughts. You live in his constant presence, constantly amid even the rush of the day his memory floats into your mind and brings a throb of joy with it. Thus you feed your love with thoughts of him. And it is just in this way that those who believe in Christ are nourished. Their love is fed by thoughts of Him, by His graciousness, His forgiveness, His strange pitifulness, and wistful grace.

Or take another illustration. When a musician hears a very beautiful piece of music he is fed by it; his musical instinct is satisfied, it is food to him. His whole nature is uplifted, satisfied, nourished by it. When a painter sees a beautiful piece of art his sense of the beautiful expands, he drinks in the beauty, and as he does so his

artistic nature is satisfied and replenished by it. It is not only that he has derived pleasure, something is added to his nature, he has received added strength, has been nourished and fed? When you look at a beautiful landscape you heave a deep sigh of satisfaction. What is that but your sense of the beautiful being fed? You absorb it, store it within you, treasure it, feed upon it. So when the spirit of man looks to Christ it is satisfied. It absorbs Him, grows into His likeness, it looks and lives. Life becomes invigorated within us because Christ is the food convenient for us. He is, as all Christian experience testifies, the "living bread sent down from heaven." He is the bread of our spiritual life.

Thus we are fed by beholding, and through our beholding we are changed into His likeness. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."

II

ATTACHMENT AND ASSIMILATION

ANOTHER answer to the question "How

may our souls feed upon Christ ? ” is—by attachment and assimilation.

First by attachment.

In that beautiful and mystical allegory of the Vine and the Branches Christ teaches us how we can be nourished by attaching ourselves to Him. “ Abide in Me,” He says. Just as the branches of the vine must be attached to the vine before they can bring forth fruit, so must our souls be attached to Christ. This attachment is necessary for nourishment. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself simply because cut off from the vine it starves. Nor can you keep it alive by offering it any other kind of food. The only way you can keep it alive is by attaching it to the vine. So the spiritual life in us cannot live if it is cut off from its natural source of nourishment. “ It withers,” says Christ in a pregnant sentence. And at the close of His allegory He says these final words—“ Severed from Me ye can do nothing.” Christ is thus the natural food for our souls ; by attaching our lives to His we are nourished by the divine life. “ The bread of God is He that cometh down from Heaven, and giveth

life unto the world." "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Next we are nourished by assimilation.

When we partake of food it becomes assimilated; it becomes part of ourselves; it becomes *us*. Without this assimilation there can be no nourishment. The physical food you ate yesterday is now incorporated in you, in your tissues, in your blood, is now *you*. So in the spiritual sphere when we feed upon Christ by faith, when we live in His conscious presence, when we behold His beauty, and enter into fresh sympathies with Him by prayer and well-doing, then the food we receive by this attachment becomes part of us. That is to say Christ Himself forms Himself in us. "If a man love Me," He says, "he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode in him." The more then we feed upon Christ the more possession does He take of us; He builds up our life with His Own.

This thought of nourishment through assimilation profoundly affected the mind of Paul. It is one of his dominant inspirations. "I live," he says, "yet not I, but Christ that

liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." And his hope of glory for himself and for the Colossians is this—Christ in us, Christ gradually forming Himself in us through assimilation; we feeding upon Christ, until gradually our minds, our wills, our affections become no longer ours, but His.

III

THE HUNGER OF THE SOUL

WE have now carried this analogy far enough, we trust, to make it clear and conclusive. Let us now strive to apply it to our own experiences and needs.

The test of vigorous life is hunger for food. The proof of weakness and debility is loss of appetite. By this means we may test our own spiritual health. When our spiritual life is quick within us then we crave for food, we crave for Christ, we hunger and thirst after righteousness. And Christ has called this hunger and thirst "Blessed," and has promised that those who thus hunger and thirst shall be filled.

No one knows anything of the facts of life who does not know how deep this hunger is, or how intense is the satisfaction of having it satisfied. That is why worship is to so many the most blessed of earthly experiences. Tired in mind, depressed in heart, weary and worn by life's incessant struggle, they come up to God's House as to a banqueting-place, and there, amid the holy ministries of praise, and prayer, they are fed. Hungry and exhausted they enter; strengthened and satisfied they go away. Never has this hunger been more passionately expressed than by that Levite of the House of Korah, who, banished from the courts of the Lord's House, envies the very swallows who build their nests in its eaves. As his hunger gnaws within him, he tells us that he grows pale, his soul faints with longing. He would rather sit outside on the threshold, he declares, than in the most sumptuous haunts of wickedness. And this is not a solitary experience. The psalm would have no appeal were it not that it interprets one of life's deepest facts.

At no time does the soul of the believer realize more truly that Christ is indeed the

bread of life, the bread sent down from Heaven to be food for his soul, than when he sits down at His Table, or kneels before the Altar. He remembers that on the night on which He was betrayed He took bread, and brake it saying, "This is My body broken for you . . . For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." And so, kneeling there in prayer and meditation, the believer feeds upon Christ. He thinks of all He was, and of all He did for sinful men, and of all He has done for him, and so he partakes of Him by faith, and his soul is nourished and strengthened within him.

Many there are who could not look forward to the trials of the week were it not that they have learned how to feed upon Christ. Matthew Arnold was no upholder of orthodox Christianity, but he had the poet's vision into man's spiritual hunger, and in a beautiful poem he has expressed how the soul is fed by Christ :—

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, looked thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said :

" Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene ? "

" Bravely," said he, " for I of late have been
Much cheered with thoughts of Christ, the Living
Bread."

Oh human soul ! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light
Above the howling senses ebb and flow

To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam,
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night,
Thou mak'st the Heaven, thou hop'st, indeed thine
own.

Happy indeed, are such ! Sorrow cannot
defeat them, nor failure blight the ardour
of their hearts ; they are in the world yet
not of it, they draw the inspiration which
ennobles their lives from sources unseen.
" I have meat to eat that ye know not of,"
said Christ to His wondering disciples. " My
meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me."

IV

THE PROBLEM OF THE STARVING

THERE remains for us now one problem to
face—the problem of the starving. There
is no problem in life so acute as this, and
none so hard to solve. It is the permanent

problem in our social and political life which harasses the minds of all our legislators and public men. It is also the permanent and harassing problem of religion. And the problem is this—that in a world of plenty men are dying of starvation.

Strange to say this is also one of the oldest of problems. “O Athenians,” said Socrates, in a passage of strange and wistful beauty, “of a city the most noble and powerful, do you attend to the body how it may be clothed, and pay no heed to the soul how it may be fed?” This is the ever-recurring cry of all who peer deeply into the facts of life. They see men engrossed in material things, seeking with passionate earnestness the things which perish, hungering and thirsting in a vain delusion for things which cannot satisfy, and caring nothing for their souls “how they may be fed.” “Why will ye spend your money on that which is not bread, and your labour on that which satisfieth not?” cries Isaiah in anguish of heart to the materialists of his day. “Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” And Christ when He came saw

men filled with the same brooding care. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we put on?" These were the absorbing questions, while all the time their souls were starving within them.

And the problem is no less acute to-day. Never was there such trust in material things, such passionate and consuming thirst to possess them, and yet man's victory and man's peace lie not in these things. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man," said Christ, "ye have no life in you."

This then is the abiding problem before the Church—to awaken men to the need of their souls, to teach men how they must be fed if they are to be kept alive, and to point to Christ as the Bread of Life sent down from Heaven. Many starve because of ignorance. And this fact touched the great heart of Christ with infinite pity. Looking down upon a crowd of men and women who had followed Him expecting material blessings He saw them starving within. They were to Him a multitude of men and women "beaten down and scattered abroad as shepherdless sheep," starving because they had no one to feed them. And

so to feed them He became the Good Shepherd, and gave His life for the sheep. And the same multitude is around the doors of the Churches to-day. There they gather, dull in mind, helpless as dumb driven cattle, sunk in the stupor of poverty and sin, having no one to feed them, their souls unawakened within. And Christ calls His Church to be their Shepherd, and the only way in which they can be fed is, for men to lay down their lives for their sakes.

Many starve because of indifference. The problem concerns the rich as well as the poor, the learned as well as the ignorant, and is even more acute as it addresses itself to them. With the opportunity of commanding all the satisfactions of this life it is hard to set our affections on that which is to come. A well furnished mind, also, is no substitute in the eyes of Christ for a neglected soul. Many hide beneath a costly dress, or a gay and subtle mind, a soul that has been starved to death. And so they are miserable in the midst of their success, for a dead soul is the heaviest weight that any of us can carry.

So then the problem concerns each one

of us, and it is well if we can face it now manfully and resolutely. What we have each to fear is, that through starvation our souls may die within us. Properly speaking that is the only thing in the world we need fear. It is the only thing Christ taught us to fear. And that this fearful thing may not befall us then let us "pay heed to the soul how it may be fed." And the answer to that deep problem of life comes not from Socrates, but from Christ.

"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

"The bread of God is He which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

"I am the bread of life; he that cometh unto Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."

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